The Middlebury Campus

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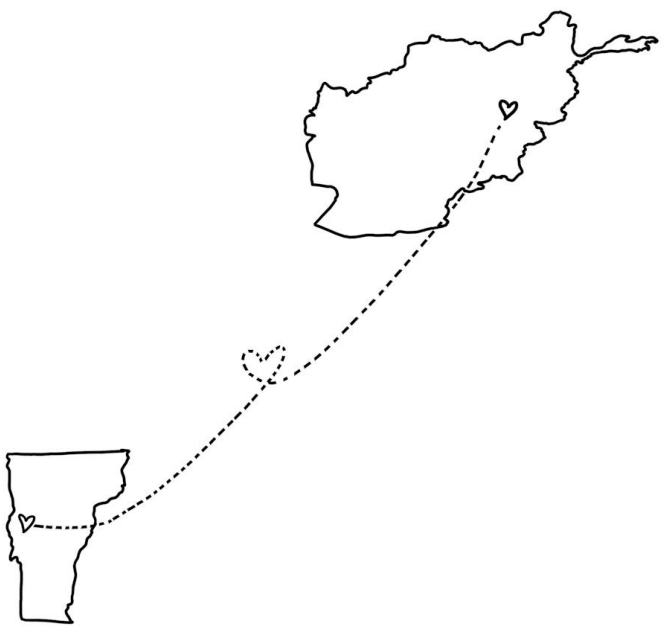
Young women from Afghanistan prepare for graduation amidst uncertainty



SABRINA TEMPLETON / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Editor in Chief

In January 2022, eight young women from Afghanistan arrived to begin their Middlebury College educations over the frigid winter break. The quiet mountain landscape and gray limestone buildings displaced the skyscrapers and big screens they had imagined when they thought of the U.S. Other students had not yet returned to campus, and the dining halls and dorms felt eerily empty.

"I thought I would be so ready, but I wasn't," Lima Abed '25.5, who had already completed a four-year degree at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh, said. She will earn another from Middlebury in International and Global Studies at the end of this month. "I wasn't ready at all."

More than four years after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, forcing the women to leave behind the lives, passions and educations they were pursuing in and around their home country, their Feb graduation is almost here. They have overcome immense challenges and achieved remarkable accomplishments, but are now faced with still more uncertainty in figuring out how to continue to follow their dreams in the U.S. in a political climate that has become increasingly hostile to

Continued on Page 2

MIDDCORE STUDENTS EXPLORE ETHICAL AND PRODUCTIVE USES OF CHATGPT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WITH OPENAI

By NORAH KHAN & LUKE POWER
News Editors

In the fall 2025 semester, MiddCORE announced its partnership with OpenAI for its 2026 J-Term session. The plan to work with the $500 billion company led to a 50% increase in applications to the program from last year, according to Robert Moeller, associate professor of psychology and director of MiddCORE. He received 133 applicants for only 44 spots.

Each winter term, MiddCORE works with a different company to invite students to face overarching, specialized challenges and work on problem solving. This year, students across a range of majors and class years are analyzing how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used in higher education to support student learning, culminating in mock presentations to OpenAI.

"The project is designed to give students a structured way to think carefully about those questions rather than accept what companies or tools offer at face value," Moeller said. "Students are not building products, they're not promoting OpenAI, but they are analyzing tradeoffs. They're thinking about multiple perspectives and developing what are hopefully thoughtful and evidence based recommendations grounded in their values."

Framing the scope of one specific challenge for students to take on and narrowing down possible tasks for a company like OpenAI required careful consideration. OpenAI has faced controversies over ChatGPT, its large language model (LLM), for its high risks for users, environmental impact and studies that show its threat to critical thinking skills.

Eliza Liebo

"My goal is to give students frameworks for making judgement to decide when AI can support their work and their learning, as opposed to trying to push either blind adoption or complete rejection of the tool," Moeller said.

Students are focusing on the ethics and productive uses of ChatGPT and other AI tools as it relates to learning.

"What are the challenges that people have to deal with? What are the bottlenecks? What are the issues with access?" Moeller said.

Theo Haythe '28 has found the work a mix of challenging and interesting so far.

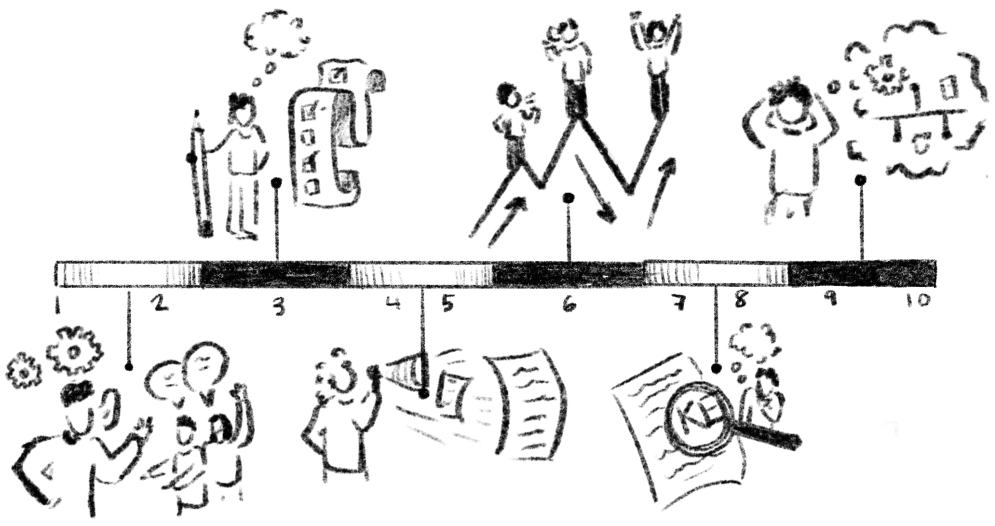
"We did mini projects in class for our first week, and are now working on research for our case study during the second week. Research has been focused on collecting clues to further our suggestion to OpenAI," Haythie said. "I've been exposed to the brightest minds in different industries, such as Geroge Lee from Goldman Sachs, Parker Harris of Salesforce, and Morgan Thomas of Accenture."

Moeller, though, emphasized that the focus of MiddCORE is in exploring how AI should be ethically and effectively used in higher education.

"We know that [AI] tools can be used in ways that are not helpful. So a helpful distinction for this is to think about the distinction between automation and augmentation. Automation is when AI replaces

Continued on Page 3

WORKING GROUPS CONVENE TO INFORM MIDDLEBURY'S 10-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



ELIZA LIEBO / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

President Baucom's strategic plan for the College includes several working groups, each adressing a central area of development for the larger Middlebury community.

By KARAN PAREKH & YUVRAJ SHAH
Contributing Writer & Managing Editor

On Jan. 14, faculty, administrators and students gathered in Middlebury College's Wilson Hall for the first student-only open meeting designed to shape President Ian B. Baucom's 10-year strategic plan — the college's first comprehensive planning initiative in more than a decade.

The discussions are part of a broader effort to organize attention and resources around the college's long-term priorities. Announced on Oct. 29, the strategic planning process has 12 working groups, structured around three central themes: "Strengthen the Core", "Connect the Whole", and "Meet the Moment." Working groups are composed of students, staff, faculty and alumni, and solicit feedback from various cohorts before presenting policy proposals to the steering committee by May 2026.

At the meeting, attendees were free to engage with any of the 12 working groups, facilitating a student-led discussion. Professor of Global Health and co-chair of the steering committee for the 10-year plan, Jessica Holmes, opened the event before inviting students to share their thoughts with representatives from each working group.

"This whole process is designed to be faculty primary, but not faculty exclusive, because we need to work with our students, we need to work with our staff," Baucom said at an Oct. 7 faculty meeting

Continued on Page 3

Students raise concerns after policy changes to SAS grants

ELIZA LIEBO / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

By MANDY BERGHELA
Editor in Chief

Changes to Middlebury's Student Access and Support (SAS) grant program this fall sparked frustration among some students who rely on the funding, raising questions about accessibility, financial stigma and how the college supports students with demonstrated financial need.

SAS grants — formerly known as Opportunity Grants — are designed to help students on financial aid cover essential and extracurricular costs not included in tuition, room and board. The program supports expenses such as winter clothing, emergency travel, medical needs, technology assistance and conference attendance. Funding for the grants comes from the Seizing Opportunities Fund, Student Support Fund, Dean's Emergency Fund and Middlebury's Student Government Association (SGA).

In recent years, applications for SAS grants have increased significantly. According to Assistant Dean for Student Success Elaine Orozco Hammond and Assistant Director of the Anderson Freeman Resource Center (AFC) Steve Zatarain, that growth prompted a review of the program's policies, including the introduction of a required financial capability workshop

Continued on Page 3

LOCAL

Henry Sheldon Museum hosts Community Tempestry Project
By KATRINA SCHWARZ

Open Door Clinic offers free health care for migrant workers
By ANNA DOUCET

▸ PAGE 4

OPINIONS

Dining hall dishes belong to the dining hall
By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Why aren't we talking about wealth disparity at Middlebury?
By GUS MORRILL, MAIA MCNEILL AND ANNALEISE DORCHINECZ

▸ PAGE 7

OPINIONS

Notes from the Desk: Signing off
By MADELEINE KAPTEIN

Letter to the Editor: Care or Censorship?
By DANIZA TAZABEKOVA

▸ PAGE 8

ARTS & CULTURE

WRMC Radio Roundup January 2026
By WRMC EXEC BOARD

Mixing it up: A glimpse into the "Craft & Culture of DJing" J-Term class
By LIAM FRENCH

▸ PAGE 9

SPORTS

From both sides of the boards: a sports editor's sign-off
By TING CUI

Tapped-in: aqua jogging
By SIMON SCHMIEDER

▸ PAGE 11

YOUNG WOMEN FROM AFGHANISTAN PREPARE FOR GRADUATION AMIDST UNCERTAINTY

Continued from Page 1

Afghans.

Abed had just begun renting an apartment in Kabul in August 2021. She was starting a fellowship working for the Ministry of Interior in the Afghan government, determined to help women gain greater rights and power. Then, the government collapsed, and the Taliban entered. In a matter of hours, her life had completely changed.

"Everyone was running, everyone was finding a way to get out of the place," Abed said. "I was like, this is not real. This is a bad dream."

She and the other future Middlebury students fled first for Qatar and then Rwanda, where the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA), their former school for girls, had relocated. SOLA's founder, Shabana Basij-Rasikj '11, helped them apply to Middlebury. Five months later, they arrived in the Green Mountains.

Their first semester was isolating and demanding as they continued to grieve the loss of their country. They were not familiar with the American games intended to bond groups at orientation, and some of their classmates who had been friendly the first week stopped greeting them, Abed said, even in passing. Having set out with the exciting aspiration of getting to know a new culture, they hadn't intended to spend most of their time together or with other international students. But often, it felt like the only safe option.

"I remember very dark days outside," Sajia Yaqouby '25.5, who will graduate with a degree in History of Art & Architecture, said. "But when I think about it, it was [dark] mentally as well."

"So it was so difficult, so difficult," Abed said. "At the same time, that made us very strong."

The faculty in the classes Abed, Yaqouby and the others in their cohort took helped them immeasurably, they said, becoming close friends and mentors that pushed them to survival and later to success. As Abed worked hard to understand the American poetry in her first year seminar, Literature and Moral Choice, Professor of Writing and Rhetoric Hector Vila recommended she add in something more light-hearted to balance her schedule: Acting I. She was shy in class, she said, but enjoyed participating in the dancing and speaking activities. With her professor's encouragement, it became her favorite part of the week.

Yaqouby and Taniya Noori '25.5 took Sexuality and Power on Stage for their first year seminar, reading and writing about sex, gender and theater — topics that would never have surfaced in the classrooms they had been in back home.

"What if I say something and it's offensive?" Yaquoby recalled thinking. "I am a very quiet student overall, but then in that class I was very, very careful."

As the women continued and completed more semesters, their confidence in the classroom and in other parts of campus life grew. They conducted research and learned more languages. They took on internships and jobs, with many working in Circulation Services and Information Technology (IT) in the library.

Yuquouby discovered her passion for her major while taking the course Mughal Art with Professor of History of Art Cynthia Packert. Afghanistan is part of the larger Persian artistic tradition, and she could read the Persian in the manuscripts the class examined. She was struck by how little of the material she had learned in her previous education, even in her two years at the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

"I think that's where my interest really got deeper because I was like, we need to talk about this stuff, right?" Yuquouby said.

Setting out to fill in the gaps, she worked towards her senior thesis with Packert on 19th-century Kashmiri manuscripts. She earned the Kellogg Fellowship, which enabled her to study the works up close at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and the Museum of Asian Art in Washington, D.C.

Abed completed an internship at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) in Burlington in 2023, which inspired not only her goal to keep working for organizations that help newcomers to the U.S., but also to focus her IGS degree on migration. Her thesis is on Afghan women's experiences with land migration, for which she traveled to New Mexico to meet and interview an Afghan woman who crossed through 13 countries.

Noori started an online tutoring program for girls in Afghanistan while at Middlebury. Through the Mellon Migration Fellowship, Yuquouby conducted research on art and refugees, and is working with a group of Afghan artist refugees in Vermont to create a mural project called "Colors of Home" to display in Proctor Dining Hall.

The interests of the young women range from health care to religious ethnography to politics and more. Abed, Yuquouby and others from their cohort have participated in the Middlebury Language Schools, taking immersive Arabic and Spanish. They said that language programs and classes helped them make more friends from all backgrounds and feel increasingly comfortable in the community.

"I had so much fun. I was me. I was so social with everyone," Abed said about the Arabic School. "Everyone was at the same level. Nobody was judging anyone."

Yuquouby and Abed described feeling stuck between the urge to help people learn about Afghanistan and advocate for better lives for the people in the country they call home, and wanting to feel and be treated like regular students. People have asked them about the Taliban immediately upon finding out where they're from — questions that bring up difficult memories.

"It's very complicated because on one hand, you want to talk about what's happening in your country — with everything going on, your experience, obviously it's important, it's valuable, people should know about it," Yuquouby said. "But at the same time, you're like, how far do I want to take this? I don't want people to know me just by what happened like four years ago in my life and not really know who I am as a person or as a student."

Yuquouby plans to get her PhD in art history from a U.S. university, but wants to take time off and work first. After years and years of school in several countries, she is ready for a break. The college's international office has been helping the cohort get their OPTs, temporary work authorizations for F-1 international students. She and some of her friends applied for asylum over two years ago and were still waiting on responses when the Trump administration in November halted all asylum decisions for Afghan nationals after a shooting by an Afghan man of two National Guard members in Washington, D.C.

Yuquouby has a work authorization permit that would last eight years, but activating it would erase her F-1 status and oblige her to leave the U.S. if her asylum application is denied. The process is complicated, and tensions and uncertainty are high.

"At this point it's getting very, very scary. Every single move you do, you get really worried," Yuquouby said.

Some of her friends have suggested that she could go to Canada. But to start over in a new country again would feel like an insurmountable task.

"That feeling of home that you find, it takes such a long time to do," Yuquouby said.

Abed recently received her green card, which permits her to obtain her U.S. passport in five years. But she was not able to study abroad in Jordan this semester as she had hoped, for fear that a national travel ban on Afghans would prevent her from safely returning.

"I didn't want to take the risk," Abed said.

She worries discrimination against Afghans might prevent her from finding a job at an organization that assists refugees and immigrants, as she is determined to. That won't stop her from trying. To her relief, she was able to help her parents relocate from Afghanistan to Dallas, Texas, in November 2024, where she will stay and continue applying for jobs after graduation.

"I'm really tired of moving," Abed said. "That's why I'm planning to stay here and really help people who are coming from different countries because I know how it feels to be in a different country when you don't know the language, the culture or anything here. That's my hope."

MIDDLEBURY TO COMPLETE $600 MILLION "FOR EVERY FUTURE" CAMPAIGN TWO YEARS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

By LUKE POWER
News Editor

The "For Every Future" campaign, now in its third year of public fundraising, is close to completion, having raised 83% of its fundraising goal of $600 million and garnering 81% undergraduate alumni engagement, just 4% shy of its goal of 85%, according to the campaign's website. With less than $38 million to raise, the campaign is the largest of its kind in Middlebury history and is anticipated to finish in June, two years ahead of the schedule it set when it launched in October 2023.

In a statement to The Campus, Dan Courcey, vice president (VP) for advancement and co-executive campaign director, Jami Black, associate VP for advancement and campaign operations and Alanna Shanley '99, campaign co-executive director and senior associate VP for engagement, emphasized the campaign's breadth as well as its quick success. It has five overarching priorities: access, academic excellence, experience, annual giving and capital projects.

The goal of access, the largest of the five priorities at a targeted $215 million, seeks to support Middlebury's financial aid programs for its undergraduate and post-graduate students, as well as to strengthen non-tuition-based financial aid for items such as laptops, books and winter clothes. Last fall, the college ran a campaign soliciting gifts from first-time financial aid donors who had their donations matched from a $10 million fund.

Currently, students can request grant funding for winter clothing support once. First year students on financial aid receive a $500 semesterly book voucher for textbooks purchased through the college's bookstore, and second, third and fourth-year students receive the same amount as a loan. Courcey, Shanley and Black stated that this campaign will "expand financial aid resources to meet the full financial need of every accepted student to enrich the exchange of ideas in classrooms and create the strongest student body possible" with "$180 million to strengthen and expand financial aid and $2.6 million for opportunity grants."

Capital projects are another focus of the campaign, with the $46 million renovation of the Christian A. Johnson Memorial building and the construction of a $50 million new museum prioritized as the two key goals. But fundraising for the capital projects priority is the furthest from completion, with only 40% of the targeted $117 million raised so far.

The renovation of the Christian A. Johnson Memorial Building was completed in the fall of 2023, at which point the building reopened for classes. The planned new museum will occupy the area upon where Old Battell Hall currently sits; the old dormitory will be demolished after this academic year to make way for the new building.

Max Moltke '28, an architecture student who has taken several classes in Johnson, has loved the renovated building.

"Johnson is one of my favorite buildings on campus, and I've really enjoyed the classes — especially in architecture — I've taken in there, and I enjoy seeing the classrooms enhanced with the latest technologies. The building really has a distinct style that separates it from others on campus," Moltke said.

According to Courcey, Shanley and Black, $114 million of funds will go towards academics, including $31 million to establish 10 new named professorships; $56 million for experiential learning, including $6.7 million for student internships and undergraduate research and $9.8 million to create assistant coaching positions and support varsity sports.

Jack Scher '28 is excited to see the school expand support from the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) for paid summer internships.

"The CCI has been really helpful in organizing funding for my upcoming internship in Connecticut this summer. Even for things as simple as money for commuting and food for lunch, it's so nice to have Middlebury supporting me, and making it easy to take an unpaid internship that will help set me up for careers down the road. I'm glad to see them making these programs a priority in its fundraising efforts," he said in an interview with The Campus.

Summer internship funding is currently capped at $1000 for first year students and short-term arts training or residences, and at $4000 for a minimum eight-week summer internship.

Regarding funding for assistant coaches, basketball player Henry Morrison '28 thinks that it will play a key role in strengthening athletics across the board.

"We lost our head coach and when we brought in a new head coach, the assistants were key in keeping continuity, and it was especially helpful for culture building," Morrison said. "Paying assistant coaches and giving them that money is important for all programs."

ABBIE CHANG / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Old Chapel. Middlebury is closing in on completing its signature "For Every Future" Fundraising Drive two years early, giving President Baucom an early win early in his tenure.

Overall, alumni engagement for this drive was strong.

"We have been fortunate to receive exceptional support from members of the board of trustees and the alumni and parent community. One hundred percent of the board of trustees has supported the For Every Future campaign, and in total, more than 22,000 donors have donated to the campaign," Courcey, Shanley and Black shared.

Alumni participation also took more forms than donations for this particular drive.

"We consider an alum engaged if they do one or more of the following: make a gift (of any size), volunteer, attend an event, or communicate with us directly. The engagement goal served to broaden the ways in which alumni could be part of the campaign, including offering non-monetary support," the trio wrote.

When the drive completes in June, it will be two years prior to the planned completion date of June 30, 2028.

Courcey, Shanley and Black emphasized that success in this particular drive is built upon the office of advancement's longstanding relationships with donors and their focus on building alumni relationships at all levels.

"Our goal has always been to build lifelong relationships with alumni, parents, and friends, fostering connections that inspire philanthropic support and investment at every level. We are grateful to have received several truly exceptional gifts, including the largest bequest in Middlebury's history. These contributions have been instrumental in achieving the campaign's success," they wrote.

MIDDCORE STUDENTS EXPLORE ETHICAL AND PRODUCTIVE USES OF CHATGPT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WITH OPENAI

Continued from Page 1

thinking, such as having a paper written for you. Augmentation is when AI supports thinking, such as brainstorming, presenting counterarguments, testing ideas, while still being responsible for the work," he said.

According to Moeller, students who use AI to support reasoning are gaining far more educational value than those that treat it as a shortcut.

Outside of AI-related projects, guest speakers from a range of industries have spoken to the MiddCORE students about negotiation, venture capital, consulting and general career advice. Beyond its strategic challenge, the program also hopes to prepare students for an ever-changing job market. Moeller firmly believes that a liberal arts education is critical to understanding a work world increasingly shaped by AI.

"AI tools have become ubiquitous across industries and often across functions. Preparing students for that reality means emphasizing reasoning and ethical decision making. In educational contexts, this makes writing and reasoning even more central, since students who can articulate their thinking clearly are far better positioned to use these tools productively," he said.

The pushback against AI usage in and out of the workplace is significant, however.

"Avoiding [AI] entirely is going to increasingly limit how effectively people can participate in the workforce. AI is already embedded in many professional tools and workflows, often invisibly. So, we're all engaging with it in software we use, that we're just not even really aware of in some ways. I think choosing not to engage at all would make collaboration and efficiency difficult, and even just some fields of participation," he said.

This week, Anthropic, a leading AI safety and research company, released a report examining the correlation between user inputs in ChatGPT and the educational background required to understand the output. The report reinforces the importance of writing and reasoning skills, suggesting that AI tools tend to amplify existing strengths and gaps.

"A lot of people thought that AI was going to level the playing field for people. And the evidence suggests it does not do that. Writing quality and reasoning skills are really strong predictors for how much value someone gets out of AI tools," Moeller said. "The work that professors do in their courses that teach reasoning skills and writing skills, those are not being replaced. They are needed more than ever."

As the college reckons with AI usage on campus, it is increasingly looking at the ways to approach the looming technology. Part of college President Ian Baucom's strategic planning includes an AI working group that addresses how to establish "college operations in an era of AI and rapidly changing technology," according to their website.

"I think Middlebury is in an exploratory phase, and I think that's the phase we should be in at this point," Moeller said.

Participant Andrew Rodriquez '28 has found the program's strategy effective in guiding students.

"Professor Moeller has been really great at pushing the envelope of the case study and shifting the needle towards making sure we are getting to the right steps. This is one of MiddCORE's most wide open cases so he has been really good at pushing us to get to where we need to be to actually present," Rodriquez said.

Students in the course will present their solutions to the community in Wilson Hall on Jan. 23.

WORKING GROUPS CONVENE TO INFORM MIDDLEBURY'S 10-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Continued from Page 1

discussing the formation of working groups.

Sign-ups for the forum remained low in the days leading up to it. On Jan. 10, Holmes wrote to student members of working groups asking for support in generating interest.

"At present sign-ups are very low and we may need to cancel the event, " Holmes wrote. "We view student input into this strategic planning process as critical to its success!"

Nevertheless, signups increased in the two days leading up to the event, with Holmes emailing the student members again a few hours before."Sign-ups were strong, thanks in very large part to your enthusiasm and outreach," Holmes wrote.

"Not every working group table was well-attended; that's okay, since some of those working groups may have seemed less relevant to student concerns," Professor of History Amy Morseman wrote in an email to The Campus. "From my vantage point at the 'Student Access and Success' table, we heard valuable perspectives from students, and we got to see them talk to each other, compare stories, and provide important nuances based on what they shared together about how Middlebury could more effectively deliver a quality educational experience."

The event was divided into three half-hour segments, allowing students to visit up to three working groups. Each table had a printout of sign-ups and the guiding questions for each working group. Facilitators jotted down notes as students spoke about their Middlebury experiences. Some used microphones to record students speaking.

Clare Rados '27 is the student representative of the "Build a Vibrant and Engaged Learning Community" working group and facilitated the group's table at the forum.

"My job is mainly to do outreach to students who have expressed an interest in the group's mission, as well as helping with facilitating conversations like the one last week, and then helping to develop our strategic objectives to submit to the next level up and where they will eventually be presented to the board after prioritization," Rados wrote in an email to The Campus.

Maddy Russell '26 also visited the "Build a Vibrant and Engaged Learning Community" working group table.

"Honestly, just having the opportunity to dream big about what the college can construct and how to maximize the buildings we already have was a fun exercise," Russell wrote in an email to The Campus. "I especially hope that it leads to greater conversation around lighting (we could always use more) and seating around campus."

The "Advance Academic Freedom" table was also well attended. Students responded to the group's first question: How can we advance our commitment to academic freedom?

Conversations highlighted the importance of discussion and respectful debate, particularly when controversial guest speakers are invited to Middlebury.

"We've heard a lot about a need for fostering a culture in which academic freedom and free expression are valued, and in which members of our community feel free to do their work without feeling pressured to conceal their views or perspectives," Professor of Political Science and chair of the "Advance Academic Freedom" working group Bert Johnson wrote in an email to The Campus. "Clear policies and fair application of those policies are important, but so are opportunities for debating our good-faith disagreements in an environment where such discussions are seen as enjoyable and informative rather than intimidating."

"They [students] described concerns about potential academic or social repercussions, a dynamic that raises broader questions about academic freedom and the conditions necessary for open intellectual exchange," a member of the "Advance Academic Freedom" Ignacio Gamero '26 wrote in an email to The Campus.

Sophia Kahn '26 also attended "Advance Academic Freedom."

"We should be part of knowing what's going on behind the scenes and have input over what resources are available or could be taken away, and how policies around academic freedom or protesting are created and enforced," Kahn wrote in a message to The Campus.

The willingness of the Middlebury community to convene and discuss the future of the institution is appreciated by working group leaders like Sunder Ramaswamy, distinguished college professor of international economics, who leads a working group focused on Middlebury's global strategy and mission.

"I have been deeply impressed by the commitment and generosity of my faculty, staff, and student colleagues," Ramaswamy wrote in an email to The Campus. "Since we first met just before Thanksgiving, they have consistently made time — despite demanding schedules and the compressed planning timeline — to participate fully in our meetings, engage with others across the community, and actively seek out diverse perspectives. Their dedication reflects a shared seriousness of purpose about how Middlebury should position itself in an increasingly dynamic and unpredictable world."

Students were excited about the opportunity to share feedback with college administrators.

"The working group reminded me that so much of how we connect and interact with each other is shaped by our physical surroundings on campus — something that we can change for the better!" Russell wrote.

As the working groups continue their discussions, students continue to call for transparency in decision-making, urging the steering committee to continue soliciting student input and to take it into consideration.

"I liked being able to have a discussion with not just other students but also community members like faculty, staff, and board members," Kahn wrote in an email to The Campus. "I appreciated that each group seemed open to listening to what we had to say and encouraged us to write or email with further questions/ideas. I just hope that our contributions are taken seriously and our voices reflected in the final output."

Facilitators reiterated that active participation will play a key role in shaping the college's 10-year strategy. Students can submit feedback to working groups continuously via a Google form.

Editor's note: Senior News Editor Cole Chaudhari '26, News Editor Rachelle Talbert '28, News Editor Norah Khan '27 and Editor-in-Chief Mandy Berghela '26 contributed reporting to this article. Yuvraj Shah '26 is the student representative on the "Define Global Mission and Strategy" working group, and Berghela is a member of the "Advance Academic Freedom" working group.

Students raise concerns after policy changes to SAS grants

Continued from Page 1

for students seeking funding.

"In identifying the growing need, we wanted to create an educational outcome to serve our students throughout their time at and beyond Middlebury," Hammond and Zatarain wrote in a joint email to The Campus. "The financial capability workshop engages in topics of destigmatizing the socialization of financial spending and savings, engages students to consider short, medium, and long-term goals around finances and concepts associated with them, and provides an opportunity to create a personal budget that is non-specific to how a student would utilize a SAS grant."

Three in-person workshops were initially offered during the fall semester, and students were required to attend at least one. The requirement became a point of contention during a session held on Nov. 11, when some students raised concerns that the workshop itself created barriers for those the grants are intended to support.

According to Maritza Orozco '26, who attended the workshop, it began with group introductions and a slideshow about financial stability. Shortly after, some students asked about the workshop's purpose, sparking a lengthy discussion about access, time constraints and stigma.

"A student mentioned how they had to take a day off from work in order to attend the workshop and how that takes away money they could've had earned had they not attended the workshop," Orozco wrote in an email to The Campus. "Another student stated that they had already applied for the SAS grant, but because they hadn't attended the current workshop, their funding was being delayed till they attended and that they needed the funding as soon as possible in order to go home during the winter break."

According to Orozco, the conversation shifted to a matter of anonymity, with students concerned that the workshop would reveal their financial aid status.

"The same student that opened up the conversation stated that at the workshop we should not have to see each other and know who needs financial assistance," Orozco wrote.

Hammond and Zatarain, who facilitated the workshop, acknowledged the feedback and emphasized that the intent of the workshop was educational, not punitive.

"We heard students' concerns raised at the November workshop regarding anonymity (these issues had not come up at the September and October workshops)," Hammond and Zatarain wrote. "For that reason, we pivoted and the required workshop is now an on-line, asynchronous workshop in Canvas."

The new requirement of an asynchronous workshop is a quick online course on Canvas that students can take at their own time. Additionally, students have the option to take a workshop on financial capability and budgeting at Dana Auditorium on either Jan. 27 or March 9, which will be open to the entire Middlebury community.

"Steve and Elaine were very understanding, they did try to explain the purpose of the workshop more in depth and their thought process on creating the workshop," Orozco wrote.

Hammond and Zatarain emphasized that due to limited funding, SAS grants will continue to prioritize students with the highest financial need determined by Student Financial Services.

"SAS grants continue to be reserved for students on financial aid prioritizing students whose expected financial contribution is $12,000 or below, and proportionally supporting students with an EFC of under $30,000," Hammond and Zatarain wrote.

In an effort to increase funding, the Senior Class Committee has chosen the Seizing Opportunities Fund for their Class of 2026 and 2026.5 Senior Class Gift.

"After meeting with Elaine Orozco Hammond in November, the committee decided to focus their gift specifically to the Student Access Support grants under the Fund," Assistant Director of Annual Giving Kara White wrote in an email to The Campus.

HENRY SHELDON MUSEUM HOSTS COMMUNITY TEMPESTRY PROJECT

By KATRINA SCHWARTZ
Senior Local Editor

Having kicked off on Jan. 3 and continuing through April 2026, members of the Middlebury community will knit portions of the Henry Sheldon Museum's Community Tempestry Project, to be displayed in the museum starting in May 2026. A tempestry is a form of knitted fiber art that visualizes and communicates climate change data.

This particular tempestry project will represent changes in temperature in Addison County over the last 100 years. The average temperature from each year will be represented by a single, rectangular knitted strip. The cooler years are rendered in various shades of blue, while warmer ones are knitted in red tones. The hotter the year, the deeper red the color of the yarn used to knit it. The cooler the year, the darker blue the yarn. These strips will be stitched together side by side in consecutive order of year to showcase the shifting temperature gradient of the region.

Middlebury Professor of American Studies Ellery Foutch, who sits on the board of the Henry Sheldon, first learned of the concept of a tempestry project at a conference talk given by scholar Shirley Wajda. The talk, titled Weather Wisdom, was about crafters knitting and visually representing climate change through an organization known as the Tempestry Project.

"I became very interested in that individual response, or record, or quickly discernable representation of climate data into something that was so intimate and handmade and personal," Foutch said. She introduced the concept of a tempestry to the museum's Executive Director, Coco Moseley, who molded it into the community project being assembled by the museum now.

"It certainly piqued my interest that it was a way to contend with the real challenges that we're seeing because of the change in climate. As a community, there aren't a lot of ways to process what is unfolding before us. Data, when you can see the numbers, doesn't always translate for people," Moseley said.

Mike Roy, former dean of the library and information services and chief information officer at the College compiled the data for the Community Tempestry Project using the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). He downloaded monthly averages for Addison County from 1923 to 2023 and used them to calculate the average temperature for each year.

With the work of Moseley, Foutch and Roy, the project has taken on aspects unique to the Middlebury and the Addison County community. Often, tempestry projects are knitted and assembled by one artist. By having each year's representative strip created by individuals within the community, Sheldon is adding an interactive element to the work.

"A big part of the project was wrapping our heads around how we could do this as a community based project, and not just one artist knitting and sharing a tempestry," Moseley said.

Moseley and Fautch are providing Middlebury-sourced wool that they are dying themselves in knitting kits to community members who have signed up to contribute to the tempestry project. The wool found in these kits was donated by a community member who used to raise sheep.

"You can obviously buy yarn, you can obviously buy anything, online, in any color you want," Moseley said. "But, in thinking about some of the driving forces behind climate change and behind what we are seeing here, and global consumption rising, and the carbon excess of shipping, there was like, oh, can we do this with local Addison County wool?"

COURTESY PHOTOS / COCO MOSLELY
Coco Moseley and Ellery Foutch dye Middlebury sourced wool for the Community Tempestry Project.

The yarn utilized for the project is locally sourced from sheep raised in Middlebury.

The kits furnished with this yarn are placed outside of the museum, where they can be easily picked up by project contributors. Needles and the knitting pattern will be provided along with dyed yarn. Both beginning knitters and those who have been knitting for years can participate, and patterns will be provided according to Moseley and Foutch.

After retiring from his role at the college, Roy turned his attention and skills to addressing the climate crisis. He joined the Town of Middlebury Energy Committee, became a board member of the Climate Economy Action Network and a columnist for the Addison Independent in his efforts to accomplish this goal. He became involved with the Community Tempestry Project after Foutch approached him.

"I got involved thinking about how we might be able to use the library space as an exhibition space and then once I left I still was interested in the project, so I kept helping out, mostly on the data side of things," Roy said.

He hopes that community members who choose to knit portions of the temporary project will become inspired to become more involved in local climate activism.

"Some people just like to knit, and suddenly they're going to be thinking about what's really happening with changes in temperature and what that means for our community, what that means for people's lives here in Vermont and more broadly," Roy said. "It's really about how do you build conversation around it, how do you get people to understand what this means and to think about what it means as well."

The Community Tempestry Project directly reflects the newly adopted vision and mission of Henry Sheldon Museum.

"We're really moving in a direction of community engagement and shared participation, and this as a curious and creative space for the broader community to engage in, and not just to exhibit what's in the collection but to be in partnership with the museum. So, this is one way that we get to live out that vision and mission," Moseley said.

Foutch echoed this sentiment. The Henry Sheldon is one of the oldest community museums in the country.

"We really want to be the community's museum, and have the community feel that way about us as well," she added.

Students who wish to become involved in the Community Tempestry Project can reach out to Coco Moseley at cmoseley@henrysheldonmuseum.org.

The yarn is dyed to specific shades selected by Foutch and Mosely, with each shade corresponding to a temperature.

Knitting materials are packaged into kits for volunteers to pick up at their convenience.

Open Door Clinic offers free health care for underinsured Vermonters

By ANNA DOUCET
Contributing Writer

Nestled behind the hustle and bustle of Porter Hospital in Middlebury is a small white trailer, home to the Open Door Clinic. Located at 100 Porter Drive in Middlebury, the Open Door Clinic is a free health clinic for uninsured and underinsured Vermonters. Although the clinic primarily serves Addison County's migrant farmworker population, it also serves locals who may otherwise struggle to afford care. The clinic provides care and services to all those who meet the eligibility criterion: having an income at or below 400% of the Federal Poverty Line.

The Open Door Clinic began in 1990, when non-profit organizations in Addison County discovered that many of their clients were unable to access affordable healthcare. To address the issue, a group of representatives from the medical community and local non-profits met to discuss potential solutions for their patients.

This group marked the birth of the Open Door Clinic, then called Community Health Services of Addison County. In 1991, Ben and Jerry's gave the organization a grant, allowing them to buy a bus that was outfitted to be a travelling clinic. Both volunteer and employed clinicians worked on the bus, increasing healthcare access across the county. In 1993, Porter Hospital partnered with Open Door and opened a standing clinic on its premises. Since then, the Open Door Clinic has continued to expand its outreach, including to immigrant populations in Addison County.

The Open Door Clinic's Executive Director, Heidi Sulis, said the clinic has kept very busy in recent years, holding clinics every Tuesday evening and one Friday per month. The weekly clinics provide primary care, and medical providers refer patients to specialists as needed.

"As a safety net organization, we try to prevent people from slipping through the many cracks and fissures of our healthcare systems. We provide acute and chronic care for adults, ages 18-65, and refer to specialists as needed, helping patients with financial assistance paperwork to access this care," Sulis wrote in an email to The Campus.

The clinic not only provides on-site care, but also offers mobile care.

"Historically, we have annually visited between 40-50 local dairy, vegetable and poultry farms and orchards, and are now expanding upon this model through four new collaborations and worksites, including Charter House, our local shelter, the John Graham shelter in Vergennes, Basin Harbor Club and several orchards who employ migrant workers," Sulis wrote.

The expansion of the clinic model was made possible in 2023 through the purchase of a new outreach van, funded by a donor and a state health equity grant. The van allows the clinic's healthcare providers to visit local farms and provide outreach.

"It has allowed us to provide care to migrant workers who, due to their long work hours, are often unable to come to the clinic. Instead, we bring the care to them," the Open Door Clinic's Clinical and Program director Julia Doucet said.

The clinic also provides insurance help and dental care, and is looking to add mental healthcare services.

"Last year, we served 1,307 distinct patients, including 394 new patients and provided 1879 medical and dental visits," Sulis wrote. "Our volunteer interpreters and staff interpreted for 568 Spanish-speaking patients across 2,411 appointments between our clinic, Porter Hospital and specialists' offices."

COURTESY PHOTO / JULIA DOUCET
The Open Door Clinic purchased a van in 2023, and are now able to offer a mobile clinic.

Middlebury students make up a significant portion of the clinic's volunteers: given its proximity to campus, Open Door has a long history of Middlebury student involvement. William Mortell '26 began volunteering at the Open Door Clinic in October of this year. He serves as one of 57 interpreters at the clinic, more than half of whom are Middlebury students.

"I help interpret for patients who don't speak English and doctors who speak a little or no Spanish. I'm essentially facilitating doctor-patient communication and making sure that both sides are getting the information they need to ensure the highest quality of care possible," Mortell said.

Mortell, like many other students, found the clinic through his longstanding connection with the college.

"I think there's a great synergy between a school that has this strong reputation for language pedagogy and students who come here interested in learning languages and building both linguistic and cultural competency. Open Door provides students with a way to use the skills they're learning in the classroom to make a positive impact on the wider VT community," Mortell said.

In an interview with The Campus, Communications and Volunteer Coordinator for the Open Door Clinic Susannah McCandless shared that Middlebury students put in over 500 volunteer hours last year.

"We train between 20 and 30 students each year at annual training, and in addition, we train another 20 or more students who come in throughout the year as volunteers," McCandless said.

The Open Door Clinic provides a way for students to get involved in the local Middlebury community.

"We often express our gratitude for working in a county that values collaboration and are happy to have the opportunity to explore and foster new relationships while nurturing and cultivating those we've held for a long time," Sulis wrote.

Applications will soon be available for the Open Door's summer internship position. They can be found on the Center for Community Engagement's Privilege and Poverty website. Any bilingual English and Spanish speakers interested in the clinic's work are encouraged to apply.

Vermont Book Shop hosts literary events at Town Hall Theater

By VIOLET WEXLER
Local Editor

The Vermont Book Shop, located on Main Street in downtown Middlebury, is hosting a series of upcoming events highlighting regional authors and literature on modern-moment issues. The independent bookstore frequently collaborates with the Town Hall Theater (THT) to host larger literary events.

On Jan. 21, THT and the Vermont Book Shop hosted an event entitled "Living on the Land, Words and Practice" with Ethan Tapper and Helen Whybrow. Tapper, a forester, and Whybrow, who previously worked in independent publishing, discuss their most recent books, "The Salt Stones" and "How to Love a Forest." In their discussion, the authors further explored "how their work and their writing informs their relationship to place."

Executive and Artistic Director of THT Lisa Mitchell handles collaboration with the Vermont Book Shop. Mitchell looked forward to the event with Tapper and Whybrow, noting that their topic feels especially relevant.

"In a time when many people are becoming less connected to the land, and more tethered to devices, these authors' unique storytelling, connected to a sense of place, is especially inspiring. And this event is at full capacity with a waiting list, which demonstrates what a hot topic this is," Mitchell said.

On Feb. 12, THT will host another event in collaboration with the book store, celebrating the launch of "Luminous Bodies," a historical fiction novel by Devon Jersild based on the life of Marie Curie.

According to the Vermont Books Shop's website, the novel follows Curies' life it attempts to stretch "beyond the mythical image of Curie as a woman of drive and consequence... and invite[s] the reader to experience her deeply personal losses and the loss of faith she suffered in the face of a pitiless patriarchy."

Jerslid is the wife of Professor Emeritus of English and Creative Writing Jay Parini, and the book was published by Paul Dry Books, which is owned by the brother of Charles A. Dana Professor of Political Science Murray Dry.

The final event the bookstore has planned as of this week highlights Hepburn Professor Emerita of Sociology Margaret Nelson's upcoming book "Peddlers, Merchants and Junk Dealers: Family Life in Small-Town Vermont." The shop plans to partner with Havurah of Addison County, an organization for Middlebury's Jewish community, for this specific program. The event is scheduled for June 2026, but the exact date has not yet been announced.

These events are free to the community and market broadly to reach students and local residents alike. Mitchell noted that affordability is important when planning events, ensuring that a diverse audience can engage with the literature.

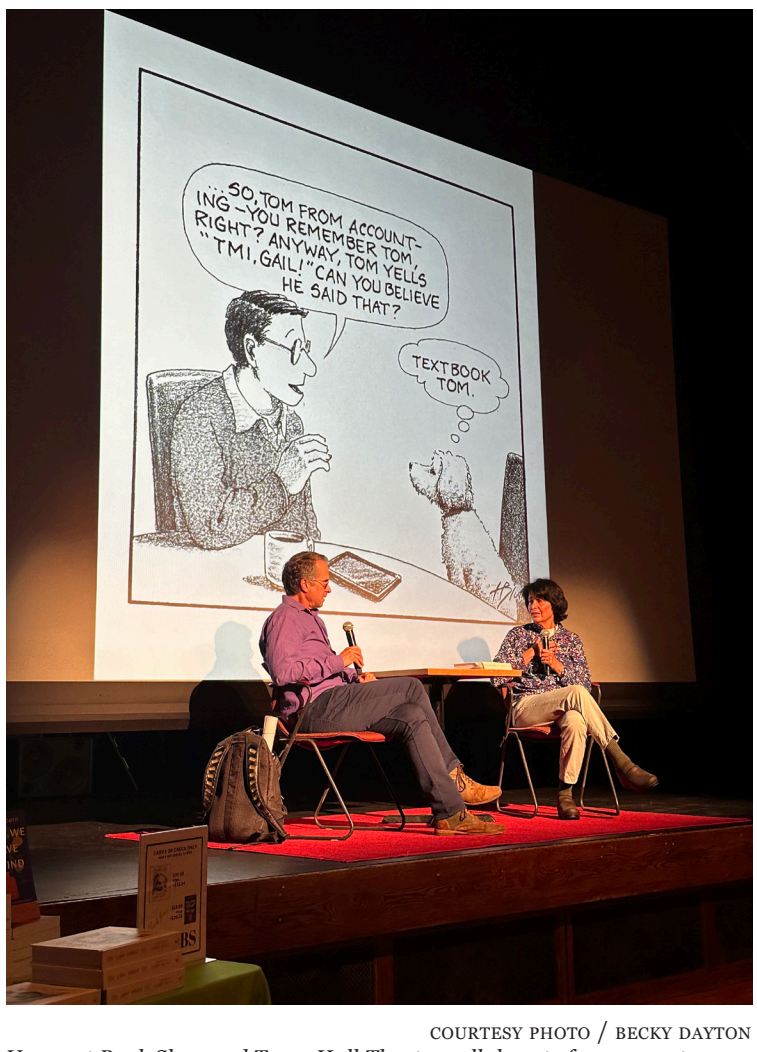
"No one is turned away due to a lack of funds. We want everyone to be able to participate in the arts," Mitchell said.

The bookstore has also coordinated events with Ilsley Public Library prior to its ongoing renovation and hosts events in its own space, such as the "Poetry in the Shop" series, where authors read their poetry out loud. But Becky Dayton, owner of Vermont Book Shop, noted that their Town Hall Theater events have been the most successful.

"[Lisa Mitchell] is just as committed to partnering with local organizations to have a really well-rounded program at Town Hall Theater that goes beyond the stage," Dayton said.

Dayton shared that these events help her to understand and engage with material that she would not have otherwise encountered. By hosting live author events, she learns about new experiences firsthand, seeing them as important for human connection.

"To experience firsthand what it's like to be exposed to the person, to the creator, to the artist, and then be influenced by it directly was a good lesson for me. I find it necessary to experience what it's like to talk to people who have different experiences from my own, and so I think that's what drives me to do these live author events," Dayton said.



COURTESY PHOTO / BECKY DAYTON
Vermont Book Shop and Town Hall Theater collaborate for an event featuring Harry Bliss and Sue Halpern.

The Vermont Book Shop and THT continue to play a vital role in the Middlebury community through their literary events, bringing audiences together to engage with authors firsthand. With plenty to look forward to in both the winter and spring, the bookstore continues to announce new events on its website.

CHARTER HOUSE WORKS TO OFFER PARTIAL RELIEF FOR HOMELESS POPULATION IN ADDISON COUNTY

By DYLAN MCGINTY
Staff Writer

The Charter House Coalition operates a shelter and food kitchen for the greater Middlebury area, providing Addison County with a relief center for homelessness. Opened in June of 2006, the Coalition has grown to offer an array of services, including case management for residents and referrals to external social programs. Over time, the organization has assumed an increasingly important role in the community, becoming integral to the well-being of Addison County.

Charter House, located at 27 North Pleasant St, was chartered in 2006 as a 501c3 tax-exempt non-profit organization. The original program, Community Suppers and Pleasant Street Community Housing, was pioneered by the Middlebury Congregational Church and quickly grew into a more complex operation. The coalition provided emergency housing for the rapidly growing unhoused population during the Great Recession in 2009, launched a lunch service, and offered residency during the winter months.

Charter House currently has 25 permanent residents, with six spots available for emergency nightly housing. Understanding the extra challenges faced by marginalized populations, they are intentional in welcoming individuals such as drug users and the formerly incarcerated.

The Vermont state government has designated Charter House as the "Lead Agency for Coordinated Entry" for Addison County, making the Coalition responsible for coordinating social services and outreach programs. One of their services, housing case management, takes a hands-on approach in helping people move out and find housing as soon as possible. This assistance is invaluable to the Middlebury community, where homelessness is a much quieter issue than in big cities.

COURTESY PHOTO/ THE CHARTER HOUSE COALITION
Middlebury residents protesting outside The Charter House on Homelessness Awareness Day, 2024.

COURTESY PHOTO/ MIDD CHARTER HOUSE
Middlebury College students preparing Saturday dinner in Sept. 2025 for The Charter House residents.

"Depending on the day, Vermont has the 2nd or 3rd highest rate of homelessness per capita in the United States. Our rate has increased over 150% since 2020," Tom Morgan, the minister of the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society, said. Addison County's home vacancy rate is about 1%, far below the healthy rate of 3%, and the area faces a severe shortage of affordable housing.

Each year in January, the Coalition organizes a Homelessness Awareness Day where local protestors gather to bring awareness to the growing issue. On Jan. 22 at 4:30 p.m., Charter House will organize a candlelight walk through Middlebury and a brief vigil at the town gazebo. Drinks and snacks will be offered, provided by the college.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Charter House greatly exceeded its capacity due to high unemployment and economic uncertainty. Its website reports that it served 90,000 meals, compared to 40,000 the previous year, and that "bed nights," or one night spent by a person in the shelter, went from 4,500 to 24,000. To meet this exceedingly high demand for aid in the community, they utilized their emergency relief funding to renovate and expand the shelter.

The college has a close relationship with Charter House — Stephen Diehl, the vice president of public affairs at Middlebury, and two students, Riley Nebolsine '27.5 and Keegan Gilsenan '25, having served on the Coalition's board.

Every Saturday, students in a Charter House club led by Brooke Dolan '26 and Mary Elliot '26 go to the shelter to prepare a meal for residents. After cooking and cleaning, if there are leftovers, the team is invited to share the meal. Meals can also be taken to go for those who do not live on the premises.

"While it's wonderful to provide really delicious food to people that need it, for me, what makes the Charter House Club truly worthwhile is fostering relationships and conversations, and in many cases friendships, between people who likely would never have met otherwise," Elliot said. "Students get to engage with the broader Middlebury community and meet people with such different experiences and learn from the stories of people living at the Charter House, and for the residents of the Charter House, who seem to really love the company of college kids and the joy and energy that they bring."

Many clubs have collaborated with Charter House to expand campus outreach and introduce more students to the organization. Club Rugby, with the help of Riley Nebolsine '27.5, organized Sunday night dinners in which players would join their teammates in cooking a meal.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: A SPINELESS PARTY IN AND OUTSIDE THE COLLEGE

Op-Ed

Noah R. Groves is a member of the class of 2028.

Middlebury College Democrats have recently emphasized their bipartisanship. They have consistently invited College Republicans to partake in joint meetings. This has been discussed in a Jan. 15 Campus article co-written by the leadership of Middlebury Democrats and Middlebury Republicans. This development has even caught the attention and praise of President Baucom on Instagram. Those who care for liberal values should not respond with praise. This development is illogical, cowardly and unprincipled.

Speaking as a College Democrat, I am frustrated. The College Democrats do not have to normalize conservatism to treat our peers respectfully. Middlebury Democrats should be kind to our peers but rebuke conservative ideals. This embrace of modern conservatism betrays the values of our party. Former President Obama stressed hope, opportunity and democracy in his 2008 DNC speech. These ideals are not radical; they are essential. However, the authoritarian party of U.S. President Donald Trump could not be further apart from hope, opportunity or democracy.

College Democrats advanced those ideals this November by protesting for the No Kings movement. Our members shouted that Donald Trump is a fascist. What does that make of our leadership when they invite Republicans to take part in meetings? Speaking as a College Democrat, I do not believe the College Republicans are fascists, but the politicians the College Republicans support are fascists. Donald Trump's denial of elections, use of force against the citizenry and erosion of the rule of law are real indicators that the Republican Party is fascist.

Speaking as a Democrat voter, I am equally frustrated with this approach to politics. On the national scale, the Democratic Party leadership extends an olive branch to conservatives and still loses. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris did not take the Gaza issue seriously and lost voters in a close election. Further, the Harris campaign touted the right-wing architect of the Iraq war with Dick Cheney's endorsement. She pulled toward the center, diluted her message and lost. It is unreasonable for a party resisting authoritarianism to embrace agreement with an authoritarian party. A bipartisan message tells the general public that the Democrats are unserious. There is no reason Middlebury College Democrats should repeat the same mistake our leaders made. It will cost our group legitimacy, consistency in our message and political strength.

No matter where you look, in the college or outside of it, liberal values are taken unseriously. College Democrats should acknowledge this reality and follow through on our principles, setting an example as colleges are meant to do. There is a lack of spine in our party, and there is a lack of spine amongst the College Democrats.

HOW MIGHT CAPTURING MADURO BE DIFFERENT THIS TIME?

Op-Ed

Joseph Zou is a member of the class of 2029.

On Jan. 3, the second-to-last day of the winter holiday that I may fully cherish, I saw the news that the U.S. forces had captured the paramount leader of Venezuela at the time, Nicolás Maduro. It all happened at such speed that when I read the news, the secret operations had already succeeded: Maduro and his family were on their way, heading to New York and awaiting trial, specifically on charges of committing narco-terrorism and importing cocaine. However, I believe the impact of this mission will be much more extensive. Now, two weeks have passed, and questions still linger in my mind: What will the long-term implications be for the Venezuelan opposition and the Venezuelan people? What does this mean for democracy in general?

When I discussed this topic with people close by, there seemed to be two dominant perspectives. Some argue, based on procedural justice, that this mission is unlawful and has set a dangerous precedent for global intervention. It is centered on the idea that there would not be just results if there were not a just process; achieving one's goal by any means will lead to greater injustice.

On the other hand, others argue, based on substantive justice, that a just cause is more important, especially when a catastrophe is unstoppable domestically. It is centered on the idea that internationally recognized human rights weigh more than national sovereignty during a humanitarian or democratic crisis.

I would nevertheless argue that debates over procedural and substantive justice might be relevant in cases such as the capture of the Panamanian military dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega Moreno in 1989. However, the capture of Maduro has gone well beyond this debate and raised significant moral concerns.

The two missions indeed have a lot of similarities: Noriega and Maduro both oppressed opposition and claimed victory in elections in which they were internationally recognized as the losers, they were both captured by U.S. forces in an area outside the direct judicial jurisdiction of the United States, and they were all facing charges related to drugs. However, there is a major difference in its aftermath. Immediately after Noriega's capture, the US backed Guillermo Endara, the opposition candidate in the 1989 election, for president, which eventually led to Panama's transformation into a democracy. Like the U.S.'s interest in Venezuela's oil, the U.S. has a strong interest in Panama, especially regarding the previously controlled Panama Canal; it did not demand the return of the Panama Canal in exchange for its support.

Venezuela arguably is quite distinctive. The current administration has shown significant interest in extracting oil resources and profiting from Venezuela's oil reserves through this mission. By pressuring Venezuela's Vice President Delcy Rodríguez on topics of oil and urging leaders of the U.S. oil industry to invest in Venezuela, the government has significantly emphasized oil, hinting that it is the priority of this mission rather than building more democratic institutions.

Then, more unanswered questions kept running through my mind. If the mission was about shifting the institution democratically, why did the current administration decide to capture Maduro but, so far, has maintained the status quo of its so-called oppressive government? If the mission was about punishing drug trafficking, why did the U.S. not capture other accomplices that have been indicted, like Minister of Interior Diosdado Cabello Rondón? If it claims to support the people in Venezuela, why has it not consulted with opposition leaders like María Corina Machado prior to the mission? If the administration is supporting the global democratization movement, why has it attempted to claim Canada as a state and not ruled out the use of force in Greenland, both of which are widely considered democratic entities?

I believe we must first determine whether the mission is motivated by a democratic transition or by its actual aim. If the core purpose was solely for obtaining the oil in Venezuela, does this not make other nations' accusations of the U.S. 's imperialist and arbitrary resource exploitation self-evident? Does it not fuel nationalism and justify the current Venezuelan government's continued rule? Such a mission, lacking a clear objective and driven solely by American interests, is undoubtedly a severe blow to a small nation's efforts to achieve long-term democratic transition.

YOU SHOULD RETURN YOUR DINING HALL DISHES

Op-Ed

The editorial represents the opinion of The Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

There has been a marked increase in vandalism and overall disrespect for campus resources over the past few years. Students, rushing between commitments or simply preferring to eat in the shelter of their rooms rather than a crowded dining hall, are taking dishes home without returning them for extended periods. They languish in dirty piles in dorm kitchens, adopted by student suite kitchenettes, broken and forgotten, or even thrown in the trash. We recently reported that the college spends between $35,000 and $45,000 each year to replace disappearing dishes.

We apologize to the dining and custodial staff — who hunt for, clean and then replace our dishes — for the extra labor and stress we have caused by allowing this issue to continue. Each of us should be more responsible not only for our individual messes but for becoming part of the broader solution.

Middlebury has a culture of toxic anonymity in how we treat our shared spaces and resources, a culture we must work to repair. There is no system to keep track of students who take a dish from the dining hall, nor a way to know if a dish will sit under someone's bed, discarded and moldy, for months before it makes its way to an already overflowing sink in a dorm's communal kitchen. Actively barring us from leaving with dishes would be an unreasonable policy to expect dining staff to enforce sustainably. It is on us, not the college, to create a much needed sense of accountability.

Students complain about understaffing problems at Middlebury, but often do not implement simple fixes to make the lives of the staff who work hard to support us better. In a predominantly wealthy student community, we foster an environment of irresponsibility in which it is assumed that someone else will clean up our messes. We can show more respect for our facilities and dining hall staff by being responsible with the dishes and not making unnecessary messes in our living spaces. One dirty bowl left in the sink might not seem like a big deal, but over time, more and more bowls add up. Suddenly, the sink is filled with a sky-high pile of dirty plates and moldy bowls that cover the kitchen counter.

While each of our individual efforts at greater accountability must come first in solving this problem, there are other potential solutions. The dining halls could begin offering compostable paper plates and cups for students to take with them when they need to leave the dining hall with food or drinks. The carabiner-takeaway box system also needs to be publicized more; if more of us stopped at MiddExpress one time for a $5 carabiner to trade in for a reusable box, stacks of dishes would remain where they belong.

We call on Residential Assistants (RAs) to take more initiative in the dorms they oversee to ensure residents are being responsible about returning dishes.

The dining hall dish situation reveals a deeper issue on our campus. It highlights a lack of respect for our dining hall staff and a lack of accountability for one's actions in communal spaces. Even though nobody's watching, promptly take your dish back to the same dining hall you took it from. When you see a dish lying around in your dorm, return it, even though it isn't yours.

We also ask that students familiarize themselves with the resources available to them at Middlebury. Every dorm has a supply closet with cleaning supplies students can use if they see a mess in their living space. If you plan to take food from the dining hall often, consider spending $5 of your declining balance to participate in the tupperware system, or bring your own tupperware, collect your food on a plate, and then transfer it into the container. These are extra steps, but well worth the effort to make our community a better, more sustainable place to live.

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Campus accepts submissions of opinions, reflections and letters to the editor from all members of our community, every week. Pieces from students, staff and faculty are all welcomed for consideration.

Email us at campus@middlebury.edu

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@middleburycampus

Why aren't we talking about wealth disparity at Middlebury?

Op-Ed

Gus Morrill *is a member of the class of 2027 and an Arts and Culture editor,* ***Maia McNeill*** *is a member of the class of 2025.5,* ***Annaliese Dorchinecz*** *is a member of the class of 2028.*

Tackling wealth inequality requires the buy-in of people coming from all different socioeconomic backgrounds, not just those who suffer from it. By the same token, collective buy-in requires discussion. So what does this mean for Middlebury?

In his 2024 book "Poverty, By America," Sociologist Matthew Desmond argues for the importance of strategic economic integration: "Engaging with one another in integrated communities allows us to recognize our blind spots, de-siloing our lives and causing families well above the poverty line to become bothered by problems that affect those below it… Integration means we all have skin in the game. It not only disrupts poverty; on a spiritual level, over time, it can foster empathy and solidarity."

Although Middlebury's student body is wealthier than most other U.S. colleges, institutions like ours are uniquely positioned to engage with wealth disparities. Students from a variety of economic backgrounds eat at the same dining halls, sit in the same classes and share friend groups. We have the beginnings of the economically "integrated community" that Desmond mentions. Yet, we are missing the engagement. It is all too easy for wealthy students to participate in the occasional class conversation on wealth inequality, and then walk out of class and drop the issue. We lose a lot when those discussions end.

Discussions of personal wealth are uncomfortable. They require examining how family history, inherited wealth and dysfunctional and exploitative systems shape our access to opportunities. Exploring these topics can feel vulnerable. It can feel safer to avoid conversations about personal wealth altogether. It's hard to acknowledge our economic advantages or disadvantages compared to others.

Engaging in these vulnerable conversations is a burden for everyone, but especially for working-class students. Although discussions alone will not erase these strains, they create opportunities to more evenly distribute the burden of wealth disparity. This dialogue can help Middlebury College "recognize our blind spots… [causing] families well above the poverty line to become bothered by problems that affect those below it." Each of us brings a wealth of personal connection to this work.

What do we lose when we don't have those discussions? Students navigate workplaces, classrooms and friendships unprepared to tackle central issues. There are times when we are obligated to broach the subject of wealth on campus: when a petition fights to prevent a more accessible Feb graduation, when rising tuition costs require students to increase their work hours, or when faculty and staff walk out over benefit cuts. Without a framework for conversations about class issues already in action, institutional and interpersonal conversations on these topics fall short, burdening the least economically privileged and silently favoring the voices of our most economically privileged. Ignorance does real harm.

Many students at Middlebury will go on to hold positions of affluence and societal influence. They will become politicians, business owners, teachers and, for many, members of the upper class. A study of post-college outcomes found that 55% of Middlebury graduates joined the top 20% of earners in the U.S. This suggests alumni have the potential to bring critical class consciousness to influential fields post-grad. Realizing this potential depends on our ability to critically engage in these difficult conversations now, during this formative time of our lives.

So how might these conversations begin, and what comes next?

First, figure out what socioeconomic class you fall into. Are you working class? Are you upper class? This requires talking to your parents about your financial situation and using existing economic data.

Second, jump into a lifelong project of honest money conversations. Lead with curiosity. You might start by reflecting on your family's jobs, how money was discussed at home, and how that affects your school life. Avoid using words like "well-off" or "comfortable" as euphemisms or as a way to downplay wealth.

Third, take action. If your family has investments, ask critical questions about their investment portfolio. Do these investments align with your political and moral values? How can you move beyond just charitable donations to fight economically oppressive systems? What resources beyond money can you mobilize? The organization Resource Generation has methods you can use to work towards a more equitable society using personal wealth.

Additionally, support policies proven to reduce poverty. For example, the 2021 Child Tax Credit expansions cut child poverty in half, only to see it rise again after the expansion ended. Passing these policies requires buy-in from the affluent, and if many of our graduates will be in that group, then conversations now matter all the more.

Lastly, participate in organized groups on campus. We have been organizing educational and discussion-focused events on this topic in partnership with the Climate Action Program. If you want to get involved in future on-campus events on these topics, reach out to the authors of this op-ed.

COURTESY PHOTO / TODD BALFOUR

The Middlebury College Snowbowl Feb-ski down has sparked debate in previous years, as the school moved it to Chapel Hill in 2024 due to weather and accesiblity concerns.

NOTES FROM THE DESK: SIGNING OFF

Op-Ed

Madeleine Kaptein *is editor-in-chief and a member of the class of 2025.5.*

My first assignment for The Campus almost four years ago took me to the basement of the Ilsley Public Library, where I remained for a superfluous three hours, asking visitors about the household cleaning products they were making for an Earth Day event. While not inherently a thrilling task, the article obliged me, a shy first year Feb, to approach and talk with locals.

I had been determined to work for my college paper because I liked to write, and because I (for some reason) admired Rory Gilmore, the quintessential student journalist. But what I found when I began was not only the opportunity to learn to craft a compelling narrative, but to find myself in situations I never thought I would, armed with a permission slip to ask almost any question that came to mind.

In the months that followed, I took on all the stories my editors sent my way. Sitting on the steps of St. Mary's church, I called businesses in town as my fingers froze in the cold to find out which owners would let me show up within minutes for an interview about shortening their winter hours (thank you, Becky Dayton of Vermont Book Shop). My first time climbing the stairs in Old Chapel was for a meeting with the dean of curriculum — I was investigating that year's messy J-Term registration process. While making my way down Main Street during the annual Middlebury Fall Festival and Car Show, a few requests for brief comments from vehicle owners earned me invitations to sit inside a 1956 Belair Chevrolet and a 1972 Lotus Europa with a picture of Queen Elizabeth taped inside. I knew, and still know, nothing about cars. But it turned out that didn't mean I couldn't write about them.

As I grew into my various editor roles, I took on still more articles. I've been a fly on the wall at faculty meetings, typing notes on heated debates about graduation requirements and a certain costly graduate school. Other editors and I took a tour of New Battell last fall while it was still under construction and climbed into the cupola on its roof, unveiling a unique view of campus. I tracked down employees at Sugarbush Resort via Reddit who opposed Vice President J.D. Vance's visit to their slopes. Each new article I wrote and published brought me fresh satisfaction — I was helping people in our community stay informed, getting more experience, becoming closer with other editors and having fun.

When I discovered my love for reporting, I did not think I would ever be editor-in-chief. In my super senior semester, I've traded being out and about interviewing and writing for long hours in our office in the basement of Hepburn Hall, thinking about story ideas, headline options, overhaul edits, page counts, InDesign tricks, spreadsheets and editorial decisions. Ting Cui '25.5 is my roommate, best friend, former senior sports editor and business manager, and I am in the habit of asking her what size advertisements we have for the next week's print issue as we get ready for bed. A delivery truck drop-off mishap even had us trying out distribution; she wheeled our Oct. 30 issue into town, and I ran around campus with armfuls of papers that left smears of ink on my hands.

While it may sound less exciting, to duck back into the control room, devote myself to something bigger than myself and watch stacks of The Campus shrink each week as our readers grab their copies has been among the most meaningful parts of my college experience. With more responsibility has come more love for this paper and what it allows us as students to achieve as we bring clarity, change, dialogue and entertainment to our school. Any student reading who has considered writing for The Campus should give it a try. You may be surprised by where your assignments bring you and what all 12 pages — even the sports section — could become to you.

TING CUI / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The crew team typically delivers The Campus, but one morning in the fall semester, a substitue truck driver left the copies in the wrong spot, leaving the team unable to find them. Madeleine Kaptein '25.5 and Ting Cui '25.5 located the papers and delivered them instead.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: CARE OR CENSORSHIP?

Op-Ed

Daniza Tazabekova *is a member of the class of 2026.*

Editor's note: This letter is in response to a Jan. 15 op-ed responding to a now-deleted Jan. 7 news article, which reported on the circumstances surrounding the death of Lia Smith '26. The paper's executive team decided to make a one-time exception to its strict editorial policy and remove the article after a long discussion and vote by Campus staff. The Campus remains proud of its 120-year history of student-run reporting and of serving as a forum for free and fair speech.

In Will Beckerman '26's op-ed titled "Ethical journalism at The Campus," he argued that The Campus acted unethically by publishing details from Lia Smith '26's death certificate, accusing the paper of prioritizing speed over compassion and violating journalistic norms.

The pain animating that critique is real and deserves acknowledgement. Lia's death was devastating for me, not only because of who she was, but also what she represented. She was the second person in my graduating class to die by suicide, invoking a sense of guilt and passive emptiness I will carry for a long time. I feel Beckerman's pain deeply and take his reflections seriously, which is why I believe his conclusion is mistaken. A press that retreats from truth in moments of discomfort does not become more humane; it becomes less free.

When The New York Times wrote about Lia, it did so with depth and care, presenting her life honestly, with all its joys and struggles. The piece did not sensationalize her death, nor did it hide from difficult truths. It demonstrated a central principle of ethical journalism: responsibility lies not in omission, but in how facts are contextualized and handled. Here, too, the reporting was careful rather than reckless. Instead of chasing gossip or conjecture, The Campus relied on verified public records, as journalists are trained to do. Calling that sensationalism misunderstands the purpose of those records and the role of a free press in making them known.

One of Beckerman's central arguments cites the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, particularly its mandate to "minimize harm." However, minimizing harm does not mean withholding truthful and relevant information simply because it is upsetting. It means avoiding gratuitous detail, lurid framing and dehumanization, all of which the original Campus article avoided. While the story was painful for many to read, it did not frame Lia as a villain nor promote myths about transgender people and violence.

What did happen was something quieter and more serious. My body tensed, my awareness sharpened, and I looked around campus with a newfound realization that some of my peers may possess unregistered firearms. That reaction matters because it speaks directly to the public's right to know. Middlebury students live in a twin reality. We are a small campus built on trust, familiarity and interconnectedness. But, we are also a community where firearms exist – sometimes unregistered, sometimes unknown to those around them. Ignoring that reality does not make us safer; it makes us less informed. Journalism that brings such facts to light does not court fear. Instead, it enables honest conversations about safety and responsibility.

Beckerman also claimed that The Campus failed to follow The Trevor Project's guidelines. I wholeheartedly disagree. The article avoided graphic detail, treated Lia with dignity and did not frame her identity as "explanatory" or "causal," precisely the harms those guidelines seek to prevent. Moreover, such guidelines are recommendations, not binding ethical rules. They are meant to inform journalistic judgment, not replace it. True ethical journalism requires balancing multiple obligations, not rigid adherence to any single external standard.

For those who loved her, the pain is profound, and no article, no matter how carefully written, can avoid reopening wounds. Acknowledging that grief is essential, but grief alone cannot be the standard by which we judge whether journalism is ethical. A press that exists primarily to shield its community from discomfort cannot fulfill its role, and a community that demands silence in the face of such discomfort does not become more compassionate. If we believe that truth matters, then we must also believe in those willing to deliver it – even when it hurts.

WRMC RADIO ROUNDUP JANUARY 2026

By WRMC Exec Board
Contributing Writers

Co-General Manager's pick - Neel Shah '26

Album Title: "I LOVE MAKONNEN" by ILOVEMAKONNEN

Genre: Rap

RIYL: Father, Young Thug, Rich Homie Quan, Lil Peep

Blurb: Over the past year, every time I know I'm gonna have a long day, this is what I put on to get me through it. My J-Term started with a lot of those days while I was shooting my senior thesis film, and "I LOVE MAKONNEN" was what soundtracked all my early morning and late night walks to and from Axinn. There's something about Makonnen's uncontrollable, delirious, oddball sing-raps that always makes me grin, and his instrumentals from heavy hitters like Metro Boomin and Sonny Digital are perfect in their head-knocking simplicity. Makonnen's melodies are off-key, a little awkward and unabashedly goofy, while still remaining absurdly catchy and rattling inside your brain for days.

"Tuesday" is the one everyone knows (and is lowkey a J-Term Mentality anthem), but my favorite is probably "Maneuvering" — which is a great soundtrack to weaving through the Proc bagel area during the breakfast rush. Another standout is "Look at Wrist," the endlessly quotable deep-fried posse cut which makes chanting "wrist" feel like a mantra. It's a super digestible and diverse-sounding EP at just seven songs, and if you are into any kind of weirdo rap, I definitely recommend checking it out.

Co-General Manager's pick - Matt Held '26

Album Title: "Commodus Died A Long, Long Time Ago" by Music For The Modern Home

Genre: Indie Rock, Folk, Alternative Rock

RIYL: The Magnetic Fields, Elliott Smith, Belle and Sebastian

Favorite Songs: Blue Planet Dogtown, Bein' A Boy (If You Wanna Be A Man), Lately The Cross-Eyed Rabbit, Saint Francis And The Sow

Blurb: Admittedly, this album was just released by a friend of mine; HOWEVER, I really love it regardless of the connection! The instrumentation of this album is truly charming and fun, and there are so many silly and winsome sounds throughout that enrich its texture. The songwriting, though, really takes center stage for me. Exploring themes of change, growing up, love and others, MFTMH's vocals and lyrics are beautifully vulnerable and quirky, making for a really endearing and enjoyable listen. The album as a whole is soft, full of care, and captures the feeling of going out into the world on one's own — a feeling that really resonates with me and I think would with a lot of y'all too. Give it a listen!

Music Director's Pick - Jude Kuykendall '28

Album Title: "Seductive Reasoning" by Maggie and Terra Roche

Genre: Folk, Rock

RIYL: Judee Sill, The Roches, Judy Collins

Blurb: A hidden folk gem of angelic harmonies from 1975, Seductive Reasoning is proudly unnaïve, yet twee jangles and sweetness float above quippy writing and brooding pianos. "Down the Dream" and "West Virginia" absolutely wreck me, but in each string section and the phrasing of every line lies a wall of softness. It's the musical version of my 4th-grade teacher demonstrating how he only eats his pancakes wrapped around bacon. Each song offers an inside joke at the end of the road, love and laughter surrounding an individual's toughness. All in all, it feels like finding a stranger's initials stitched onto an old dress, or accidentally letting a smirk slip while pretending to be asleep as your parents carry you to bed. This thing is gorgeous and weird all around.

Co-Concert Manager's Pick - Ellie Trinkle '26

Album Title: "100% Electronica" by George Clanton

Genre: Vaporwave, Synth-Pop

RIYL: TV Girl, Dean Blunt, The Radio Dept.

Blurb: Fuzzy, emotional instrumentals make Clanton's debut album an endearing journey from start to finish. Perfect for those long winter nights when even your warmest blanket can't soothe you. Its imperfections make it all the more enjoyable, stumbling over itself in all its intricacy. Clanton creates a soundscape reminiscent of the in-between parts of winter, blending jingly instrumentals with harsher ones, weaving cold and warm together. I always return to this album when I need to find solace in impermanence. It rocks me to sleep, bundles me up and swirls around my head. A great album to tuck into your pocket and find months later.

Co-Concert Manager's Pick - Violet Gordon '26

Album: "FJL" by Felicity J Lord

Genre: Experimental, Ambient

RIYL: James Ferraro, Friendzone, Otto Benson

Blurb: I listened to this album on repeat 8 times on my drive home over winter break. There wasn't much of a choice because I accidentally packed all my other CDs in my trunk, so it was all I had going for me, but I had an awesome time! The first few tracks feel like 2017 hype williams / stripped-down bar italia, then it makes a slightly jarring yet welcome alt-pop turn with some lovely female vocals after a few songs. Around track five, it morphs into more ambient, yet somehow acoustic-ish, stuff, with vocals that sound more like a conversation or monologue than anything else. The ambient/vocal combo made the whole thing feel revelatory, perfect for a five-hour winter drive.

Editor's Note: Ellie Trinkle '26 is the Senior Arts & Culture Editor.

COURTESY PHOTOS/RESPECTIVE ARTISTS & WRMC

1. "100% Electronia" by George Clanton.
2. "FJL" by Felicity J Lord
3. "I LOVE MAKONNEN" by ILOVEMAKONNEN.
4. WRMC Radio Roundup Visual.

MIXING IT UP: A GLIMPSE INTO THE "CRAFT & CULTURE OF DJING" J-TERM CLASS

By LIAM FRENCH
Contributing Writer

To become a professional DJ requires a comprehensive musical knowledge, mastery of the turntable technology and the ability to read the dancefloor. In the highly sought-after J-Term Class "Craft & Culture of DJing", my peers and I have spent our month honing our DJ skills.

Under the musical tutelage of resident DJ and co-owner of the Swift House, "DJ Serena Kim," we have grown a new appreciation for the role that the DJ plays in music and dance culture. The course will soon culminate in a final DJ set hosted in the Freeman International Center Bunker from 7-10 p.m. on Jan. 29. We will be performing the music we have studied on the turntables in 20-minute increments: Arabic Electronic, Reggae, Hip-Hop, Afrobeats, Disco, Techno, EDM, House and a finale of Latin Trap/House.

The vastly different backgrounds within the art form coalesce into one factor that unites all DJs: liberation in the act of mixing and playing new music.

Whilst learning to DJ for our J-Term class, we have been exposed to new songs and genres of music by DJ Serena and our fellow peers alike. Reading "Last Night A DJ Saved My Life" by Bill Brewster helped us to explore the roots of the art. This, alongside listening to the pure, genre-defining, and hidden-gem songs of Reggae, Disco, House, Hip-Hop, Techno, EDM and Afrobeats, uncovered the socio-cultural-political roots of these musical genres.

The class emphasized that the origins of most Modern Dance music were in the Caribbean. Riddims brought to Jamaica by enslaved Africans were transformed throughout the years of their performance. Their repetition, groove and low frequency centered on drum and bass resulted in a music that was both felt and heard. As the sound evolved from Mento to Ska to Rocksteady to Reggae, a new social movement emerged: Rastafarianism. Spearheaded by Pan-African and Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey, preaching a "return to nature and spiritual connection," the social religion spread like wildfire across the Caribbean and the world through Bob Marley's Reggae Music. The Culture of Reggae and its performance in dancehalls through soundsystems created by the first DJs and Dub artists inspired the culture of DJing. This musical performance style was brought to the New York Boroughs of Brooklyn and the Bronx by Jamaican immigrants who, in sharing their craft, gave birth to modern music and DJ performances.

One might associate Disco with Flashy Suits, Bell Bottoms, glimmering strings, guitar riffs and a four-on-the-floor beat. However, that white-American mainstream idea of disco eventually led to its demise due to the Rock'N'Roll uprising in Middle America. Now, pure disco music was not a sound; it was a feeling created from Afro-jazz, Caribbean and Latin dance, and Philadelphia Soul, sounding wildly different from what it would eventually evolve into.

Its roots were planted in the movement for black and queer liberation in the late 60s and early 70s. After the Stonewall riots, a family of like-minded black and gay men would reune in the apartment of legendary DJ David Mancuso for after-hours events with liberating music without fear of police retaliation and NYPD raids. They danced together in this space to feel free.

During a guest lecture and workshop from DJ Serena's colleague, Brooklyn-based DJ Gold Finger, he noted that "Music isn't a sound, it's a feeling." The DJ feels it in their body the same way that the dancers feel it on the floor. Music moves people through the night. It's the DJ's duty to feel the energy within the space and the music that he plays in order to convey the story contained in their DJ set throughout the night.

DJ Goldfinger grew up in a musical family, starting as a child prodigy on the turntables at just nine years old. He grew up listening to Soul artists like Stevie Wonder, Aretha, and Al Green, and he believes that there is soul in every music genre and every musician.

"Anybody that feels passionately about what they do has soul," he said.

Frankie Crocker was another influential artist in DJ Goldfinger's emerging musical palate during the beginnings of Hip-Hop.

"He was one of those guys who played the big song that you had never heard before, cause he had so much cashé he put you on what to play and what felt good," Goldfinger said.

During his childhood in Downtown Brooklyn, DJ Goldfinger would frequently run into neighborhood celebrity Hip-Hop Artists and DJs while roller skating around listening to music on a boombox.

"The first foundational platinum Hip-Hop Supergroup Houdini was my neighbors," he said, "We used to watch Run DMC leave on the tour bus through the window waving hey's, and be safe." He'd play the music that he knew and had available to him, went hunting for new records in his neighborhood, and exchanged music with friends, becoming known not only for the songs that he played at functions, but how he worked them on the turntable.

"Back in those days we would have block parties so you'd have gatherings of people from outside your neighborhood come into your neighborhood, so certain songs you'd be known for is kind of how the neighborhood reflected itself, " Goldfinger said.

If DJ Goldfinger had to elect one artist to represent Brooklyn, he'd be faced with a tough choice: "Biz Markie was the sound of Brooklyn for a long time, but you know how Brooklyn is, so vast [the city is] always changing." And so is the rest of the DJing community. From its technology, to genre, to its culture, DJ Goldfinger notes, "everything is always moving, everything is always changing."

While the class covers many different musical genres, both DJ Goldfinger and DJ Serena note that the concept of "genre" is made up. DJ Goldfinger notes, "Genre is dictated by culture." In my understanding, it's an arbitrary box that was designed in the beginnings of recorded music and radio to separate black music from white music, black radio from white radio, and black DJs from white DJs.

"In this class we aim to make DJing an inclusive space for everyone at Middlebury," DJ Serena said.

Starting out as an unpaid intern at a record Label, DJ Serena eventually worked her way up through networking with other DJs, performing as a backup DJ when the one that was booked for the night was a no-show. She eventually landed solid NYC gigs at Limelight and Tunnel, working in Beat Street Record where she met DJ Goldfinger, and writing music journalism for hip-hop Magazine "Vibe" in the 90s, making her one of the first female hip-hop journalists. Though she may not fit the typical mold of what one might imagine a DJ to be, she continues to guide a cohort of new DJs, passing down her compassionate and inclusive pedagogy of DJing.

JOANNE ZHANG/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

1. Serena Kim manning the board in "Craft & Culture of DJing" class.
2. DJ Goldfinger, Kim's colleague, paid the class a visit.2. The full cast and crew of the show.

FINDING KEROUAC: A WEST COAST LITERARY SOJOURN

By CHRISTY LIANG
Arts & Culture Editor

Even before I booked my plane ticket to San Francisco, Calif. (on a whim), I had wanted to go to City Lights Bookstore — the old gathering place of the Beats, where Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" was first published in 1954, and where generations of Beatniks continued to pay homage.

I was 16 when I first read "On the Road," and was immediately entranced by the viscerality of Jack Kerouac's voice, the fluidity of meeting people at the time and the porousness of all boundaries — sexual, moral and spiritual. I remember finishing the book enveloped in the delicious evening heat in Singapore's Botanic Garden, a wave of euphoria washing over me. Like many other Kerouac fans, I had devoured the following passage countless times, copied it in journals and committed it entirely to heart.

"[...]the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"

The Beat Generation emerged as a countercultural response to the spiritual void in post-WWII America, with Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs as its most salient voices. The movement first started at Columbia University, where Kerouac and Ginsberg were both dropouts; by the 1950s, it had settled in the Bay Area, especially in neighborhoods near Beat poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti's bookstore, City Lights.

Beat poets wrote in an authentic, unfettered style, with minimal edits. "First thought, best thought" was Ginsberg's philosophy. Hallucinogenic drugs, sexual freedom and affinity with Eastern religions characterized much of their lifestyle.

When I finally walked up the hill in North Beach and saw City Lights in person, I felt like travelling back in time and patting my 16-year-old self on the shoulder. "You made it," I wanted to whisper to her.

The second floor of the bookstore features a poetry room dedicated entirely to the Beat Generation and is thoughtfully decorated with historic photographs and posters. It's obvious, however, that no amount of restorative effort could replicate the glory of the bygone era. I've already acquiesced that the closest I'd ever come to Kerouac would remain the moment when his words first kindled a part of my adolescent heart. Something was set aflame and kept on burning — will not stop burning, I hope.

I picked up multiple books from City Lights. "Artful" by Ali Smith, "Strange Hotel" by Eimear McBride and "My Mother: Demonology" by Kathy Acker. I finished "Strange Hotel" during my West Coast sojourn. A dreamy glimpse into the potently dark landscape of feminine impulses and self-deconstruction, the endless (and wordless) tug-and-pull between men and women in hotel lobbies, bars and rooms around the world.

I also discovered "Checkout 19" by Claire-Louise Bennett in Dog Eared Books, another well-curated independent bookstore in the Mission District in San Francisco. Picking it up from the shelves and immediately feeling I should buy it, I started thinking about the ways we encounter books throughout our lives, seemingly at random, which was the book's thematic concern, too. As if by unspoken affinities, the invisible hand of the universe orchestrates encounters between humans and books — in dusty corners of used bookstores, childhood cabinets, as presents from people who have greatly understood us at a time, maybe still do.

COURTESY PHOTO/ CITY OF LIGHTS BOOKSTORE

From the City of Lights Bookstore in San Francisco, California.

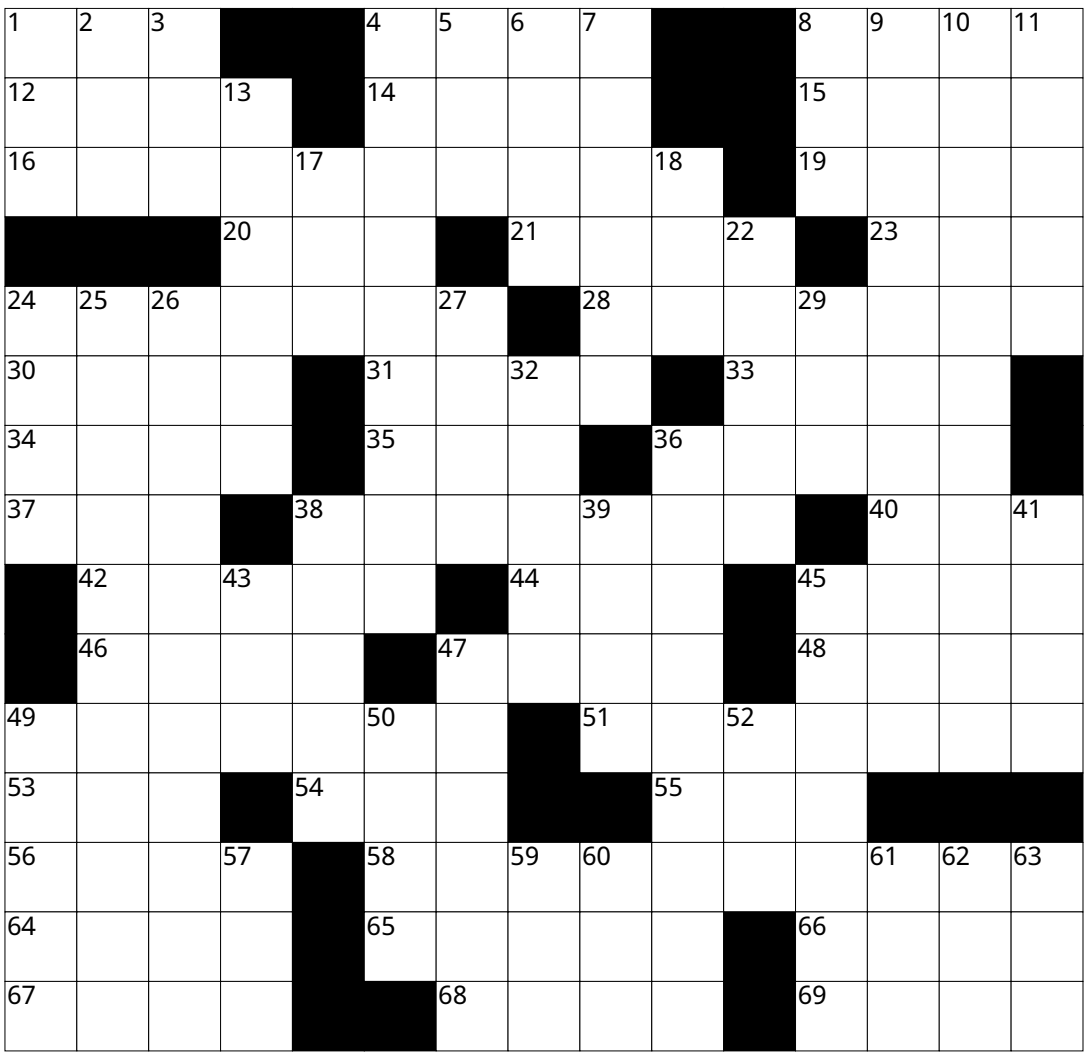
Most interestingly, certain books seem to enter our lives exactly when we need something from them — a quote, a new framework of thinking, a particular way someone has worked through a blockage — when their tenor corresponds to something stirring within us. I've always believed in resonance, not just with people, but also with spaces and inanimate objects as well. The idea of resonance between texts and individuals feels particularly beautiful to me.

There's also a joyfulness to discovering books on trips, the way they inevitably bear the imprints of streets, subway rides and the versions of self temporarily invented in new cities and landscapes.

Before my trip, I had imagined the West Coast as somewhat culturally barren, known primarily as a tech hub. But wandering in San Francisco has proven me wrong. I'm already looking forward to further delights, bookish or otherwise, upon future returns.

Skittles

Avery Goldstein



ACROSS
1 Recede
4 Tropical tree
8 Village People hit
12 Singer Amos
14 Seehorn of "Pluribus"
15 Burns's beloved river
16 Chipotle meat option
19 Like a bug in a rug
20 Sack
21 Pollution portmanteau
23 Sketch show that Finn Wolfhard hosted last week
24 Comments
28 Decide that one will
30 x, y or z
31 Like a quilt
33 Wedding cake layer
34 Desire to scratch
35 ___ kwon do
36 Tie the knot
37 Albanian coin
38 Chews out
40 UFC sport
42 "When pigs fly!"
44 24 hours
45 Low poker hand
46 Colors, as Easter eggs
47 "Insecure" star Rae
48 1952 Winter Olympics site
49 2000 Christopher Nolan film about memory loss
51 Squashed
53 Kerfuffle
54 Multivolume ref.
55 Walk-___
56 Pond gunk
58 Sound of the 1970s
64 Narwhal feature
65 Contemptuous look
66 Chocolate buttons with matching initials, and a hint to the starred clues
67 Editor's override
68 Olympic sword
69 Petty squabble

DOWN
1 List-ending abbr.
2 Fluffy neckwear
3 "It's c-c-c-cold!"
4 Middlebury frisbee player
5 Sounds of relief
6 Meadows
7 *Hit AMC series that ended with a Coca-Cola ad
8 NFL gains
9 *Popular tune around Halloween
10 Proverbial long distance
11 ___-Saxon
13 How some tips are paid
17 Spot for an AirPod
18 "You've got mail" co.
22 Allude to
24 Skate park fixture
25 Version longer than a theatrical release
26 *Clubhouse host with white gloves
27 ___ the deal
29 Round fig.
32 Fuses
36 *Minnesota Lynx forward and activist
38 Binary question type
39 Lip
41 Yankee nickname
43 Geese formation
45 Marsupials
47 Salt additive
49 Sail supports
50 Koppel and Kennedy
52 Albuquerque sch.
57 NYSE, e.g.
59 When the regular NFL season begins
60 Bee chaser
61 Index that tracks 500 companies
62 "___ little teapot..."
63 Chicago winter hrs.

AMATEUR VS ATHLETE: A FIGURE SKATER'S LAST HURRAH

By KANAN CLIFFORD
Staff Writer

"Oh my god. It was the most awesomest thing, 'cause leading up to it, you're like 'I can't do it! I can't. I can't! And then, bam, I can!'" said Tonya Harding in the fictionalized account of her life –– "I, Tonya," after completing a triple axel. The triple axel involves 3.5 rotations, and is so difficult that fewer than 30 female skaters have executed it in competition.

My first time on the ice in over 10 years did not end with a successful triple axel, I'm afraid. It ended, however, with a deep appreciation for figure skaters, all those who work at Chip Kenyon Arena and a bittersweet farewell to a pillar in the Middlebury skating community (and a fellow sports editor).

Figure skating club Co-President Ting Cui '25.5 was our guide for the day, sifting through boxes of figure skates to find us ones in our size. Cui, a former Team USA figure skater, received a bronze medal at the 2019 World Junior Championships, becoming the first American woman to medal at World Juniors since Gracie Gold in 2012. I was about to get a lesson from the best of the best.

As I laced up my skates in the changing area, the smell of homemade cinnamon hot cocoa and cookies wafted over from where Alianza Latinoamerica y Caribeña was holding a practice in conjunction with the Middlebury Figure Skating Club. A tight-knit, community-focused team, the Middlebury figure skaters hold a learn-to-skate workshop during J-Term and are currently preparing for their Winter Carnival Ice Show, which will include individual and group performances.

I cinched my skates tight and waddled penguin-style out onto Kenyon Arena's ice, tightly clutching the wall as if any extraneous movement might cause me to slip and fall.

"March forward, one step at a time," Cui said as I inched off the wall and clumsily made my way across the ice. "There are two edges, inside and outside, and two directions –– back and front," she continued. With her encouragement, I was slowly making progress.

After 15 minutes of marching and going from edge to edge, I felt like I was zipping across the ice — incessant foot pain was the only thing slowing me down. Then I looked over at Cui and club member Esteban Molina '27 and instantly saw them flying through turns, spins and jumps at least 20 times faster than me.

I realized at that moment that Tonya Harding (and Cui) were right. I can do it, even if my achievement is making it from one end of Kenyon to the other, sans the triple axel. The ice invites us to challenge ourselves, and Cui has helped create an environment at Middlebury that welcomes skaters of all kinds.

"The people here have so much more to offer than just ice skating. They have unique paths to the sport and are involved in so many different activities," Cui said. I got a sense of the enriched community from my time in the skate-changing room, where Middlebury students from diverse backgrounds and experience levels shared delicious hot cocoa and humorously debriefed their session.

The rink, although vast in size and spectator capacity, has a cozy feel. "Kenyon is my favorite rink of all time," Cui said. "It feels like home."

Adding to the community is Pete Funk, one of the rink's ice resurfacing Zamboni drivers, who came by to strike up a conversation.

Funk and Butch Atkins drive the Zamboni, often waking up as early as 5 a.m. to lay down fresh ice, and sometimes finishing work as late as 9 p.m. The two have grown to know and respect Cui's talent and her dedication to Middlebury's figure skating program.

"Ting is incredible," Funk said as we watched her execute a spin. "It's been a joy getting to watch her skate."

This was a special edition of Amateur vs. Athlete, as three of The Middlebury Campus' own sports editors — myself, Theo Maniatis '28.5 and Senior Sports Editor Simon Schmieder '26 — took to the ice to skate one last time with Cui, our former Senior Sports Editor and the current Business Director for The Campus.

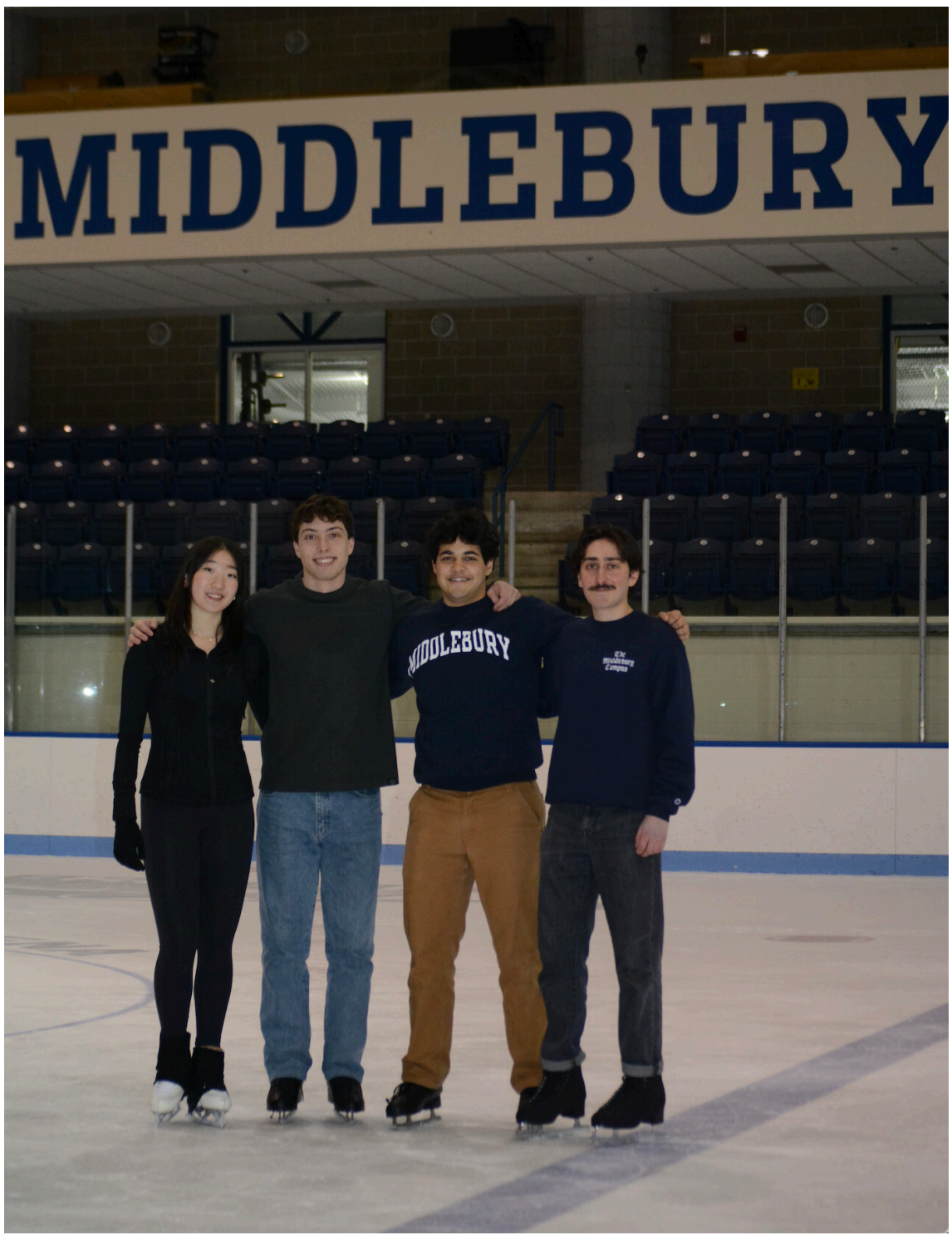
Maniatis and Schmieder agreed with Funk. "The people she's competing against aren't full-time students," Schmieder noted. "She's going to Middlebury and excelling while also pushing herself to the limit. Her ability to do it all so well is insane."

"She's an incredible skater and an incredible person at the same time," Maniatis added.

"Ting will be impossible to replace," Schmieder finished.

Cui's contribution to this school won't be forgotten as she inspires all of us to keep saying I can — from sports editors to Zamboni drivers to the members of Middlebury's figure skating team.

Editor's Note: Ting Cui '25.5 is the business director and a sports editor for The Campus. She had no involvement in editing this story. Simon Schmieder '26 is the Senior Sports Editor, and Theo Maniatis '28.5 is a sports editor.



COURTESY PHOTOS / ESTEBAN MOLINA

The Middlebury Campus sports section on ice in the Kenyon Arena.

WOMEN'S SQUASH GOES UNDEFEATED IN HOME TRIPLE-HEADER

By THIE HARTHONO
Contributing Writer

The Middlebury women's squash team maintained their top form, extending their winning streak to eight in last weekend's testing triple-header. The Panthers routed the visitors from Maine, beating #18 Bowdoin 8–1, #24 Bates 9–0 and #17 Colby 8–1.

The Panthers have historically fielded an elite squad, consistently placing within the top 15 nationally. This season has been no different. After losing 0–9 to Dartmouth and Cornell to start the season, the women's squash team has since gone undefeated. They came into last weekend's triple-header ranked 14th nationally.

The early defeats motivated the team to play at a higher level.

"Those first two matches motivated us to get better, to play at the same level as those girls, and that motivation helped us, especially against teams we really wanted to beat like Georgetown," co-captain Izzy Ronda '26 said.

The team also missed key juniors in those early matches — their return from abroad has brought the ladder back to full strength this January.

"Having our juniors back has really contributed to the team's morale and our level of play," Ronda said.

"The amount of love on this team is impossible to put into words – we've truly become sisters – and there are two sets of actual sisters on the team!" Aanvi Anand '28 said.

The depth of this Middlebury squad was on full display over the weekend. Against Bowdoin, the Panthers swept six of nine matches, dropping only one.

Lindsey Burnham '26 and Madeline Schwarz '27 opened the matchup with 3–0 victories. At the top of the ladder, Burnham tallied an 11–6, 11–3, 11–5 sweep over her opponent, and Schwarz conceded just nine points across her three-game win at the seven spot.

In the longest contest of the matchup, Lillian Showalter '29 stormed back from a loss in the opening game to win 3–1. A loss in the fifth spot stalled the team's momentum, but with the matchup decided, Ronda and Sabrina Schwarz '27 closed out the meeting with decisive wins in the final two matches. Ronda swept her opponent, and Schwarz allowed just eight points over her final three games, winning 10–12, 11–2, 11–5 and 11–1.

On Saturday, the Panthers returned to the courts to defeat Bates 9–0. Middlebury dominated, not handing a single game over to the visiting Bobcats.

Schwarz beat her opponent in the seventh spot, conceding just three points. At the top of the ladder, Burnham claimed her match 11–5, 11–3 and 11–5. Caroline Didden '28 in the eighth spot surrendered just one point, and Lucy Ronda '28 in the ninth spot won via retirement, dropping none of 19 points played.

Closing out the weekend, the Panthers again dominated their guests, defeating 17th-ranked Colby 8–1.

Up 2–0, Burnham battled to five games at the top of the ladder, winning 11–6, 8–11, 11–8, 2–11 and 11–9. Lucy Ronda and Mariana Reedich '27 secured the match, sweeping their opponents in the ninth and fifth spots. Facing a 2–1 deficit, Anand battled back to earn a five-game victory (11–4, 8–11, 6–11, 11–6, 11–9) in the second spot.

In the last match of the day, Izzy Ronda fought a difficult 55-minute showdown at the third spot. The first two games were split 12–10, and she claimed a thrilling 15–13 tally in the third before losing the last two games 11–7 and 11–3.

Throughout the weekend, the Panthers showed endurance, fighting for every last point even after the contest had been decided in their favor. They conceded just two matches against three opponents. "As a team, every point, every match, we try to focus on the squash rather than a win or loss," Izzy Ronda said.

A triple header can be gruelling, and the Panthers look to one another for support and motivation.

"If I'm low on energy or feeling fatigued on game day, I know someone else will bring extra excitement and intensity, and that energy becomes infectious and lifts up the whole team," Reedich said.

COURTESY PHOTO / GEORGE MADISON

Caroline Didden '28 surrendered only one point in her match against Bates.

The 8-2 Panthers host 23rd-ranked Hamilton on Tuesday, Jan 20. A packed schedule and short turnaround to their next matchup means that rest and recovery are key. For that, the team turns to yoga, ice baths and post-practice walks to stay ready for future matchups.

Sixteenth-ranked Williams, a historic rival, visits Middlebury on Saturday, Jan. 24. Winning the matchup is a big goal for the squad, and this weekend's dominance has given the Panthers a confidence boost.

"Our six-match winning streak — hopefully seven after we play Hamilton — gives us a lot of momentum heading into our match against Williams on Saturday because we know we're capable of doing hard things and coming out on top," Reedich said.

Looking further ahead, "keeping up the fitness, making sure we're having fun, maintaining our level, and not burning out" is what the team is aiming for, Izzy Ronda explained. With upcoming NESCAC and National tournaments, the team feels optimistic and ready to compete.

"This team is pretty special, we're very strong through the entire top nine," Izzy Ronda said. "Everyone is ready to lay it all out [this postseason], especially for the seniors."

Editor's note: Izzy Ronda '26 is a local editor.

FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE BOARDS: A SPORTS EDITOR'S SIGN-OFF

By TING CUI
Sports Editor and Business Manager

I came to Middlebury as a figure skater with five years on Team USA, trying to figure out how to balance training in college and exploring other interests. As an Aaron Sorkin devotee, I'd romanticized the fast-paced world of journalism through "Sports Night" and "The Newsroom." I loved writing. I wanted to try telling other athletes' stories. Little did I know that the sports section would launch me to the Olympics — just not as a competitor.

My first story for The Campus was about the sailing team, which I didn't know existed until an editor assigned it to me during my sophomore year. I showed up to my first interview with a notebook and the peculiar confidence of someone who has spent their entire life being very good at exactly one thing. The sailors were patient as they explained the vocabulary of a sport that is subject to the whims of the wind.

I had discovered that I loved learning about sports I would never be good at, sports that required no talent from me but devoted attention. Five hundred seventy words on Lake Champlain practices and vocabulary I barely understood. Page 12. I was absurdly proud.

Two weeks later, I was back at it, covering Middlebury's first official Highland Games, affectionately called the "Middland Games" (kilts optional). It was there that I watched former Middlebury offensive lineman Thomas Perry '25 casually throw a telephone pole in an event called the caber toss. I learned about the monumental effort of organizing the event, asked stupid questions and awkwardly interviewed spectators. I kept showing up.

Being a figure skater who writes about other sports meant spending my whole life as an expert in one niche, only to suddenly have to become an expert in several new ones in a day's time. Every Winter Olympics, I explain triples versus quads, why edge quality matters and the difference between singles and "couples" skating (more officially called pairs and ice dance) with ease. Then I'm asked to cover Kelly Ferrero '23.5 reaching 1,000 digs, and I'm asking what a dig is, why 1,000 matters, and what makes a great libero versus an okay one. When I set out to report, I had to exchange confidence for vulnerability and curiosity.

By junior year, I became a sports editor and worked my way through skiing, squash and soccer. In my senior year, I was the Senior Sports Editor. The role got bigger with weekly story ideas and assignments, planning coverage, recruiting writers and more editing. Rebuilding and growing the section became one of the most rewarding parts of my Middlebury experience. Monday nights in The Campus office became a ritual where the sports editors would meet to live edit and gab about our favorite Middlebury and non-Middlebury teams. We built a little team of our own — people who cared about telling the stories of Middlebury athletes.

Some stories stayed with me more than others. Writing about the passing of Luke Hotte '77, assistant men's and women's track and field coach, meant interviewing people about the throws coach who'd shaped their lives. Sitting in a press conference for Thomas "The Tank" Perry '25, asking the first question in a room full of male reporters, I felt simultaneously terrified and empowered. (Thank you to the football friends who gave me a crash course in offensive line intricacies beforehand.) I blew past my deadlines that night as I worked to perfect the story, but my Editor-in-Chief and best friend, Madeleine Kaptein '25.5, still managed to fit the story on the front page.

The "Amateur Versus Athlete" column let me ride a horse for the first time — in the name of journalism, naturally. Hockey stories were always my favorite because I shared the ice with both teams, practicing in the same rink where I'd just watched the women's team take an overtime win against Amherst for Thursday's issue.

I never imagined my journey with The Campus would lead to covering figure skating at the Olympics with NBC, but my flight is booked for Milan the day after graduation.

TING CUI / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Ting Cui '25.5 reporting for NBC at U.S. Figure Skating Nationals.

My time with the paper taught me how to walk into spaces where I'm not the expert, how to ask good questions, how to learn a sport's internal logic fast and how to find the untold stories that matter. I have learned how to honor other people's athletic obsessions the way others have honored mine. And I learned that the best part of journalism, whether you're covering club sports or the Olympics, is getting to walk into a world you don't yet understand and stay long enough to learn why people care.

TAPPED-IN: AQUA JOGGING

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

It looks like a test for the Navy SEALs or, when done with your hands out of the water, a curious form of medieval torture. Head bobbing and body inching forward as you choke on chlorinated water, athletes who have aqua jogged attest that it can certainly feel like both.

In this issue of Tapped-in, I dive into the world of aqua jogging to explore the unique, unconventional training method known for its difficulty, which endurance athletes begrudgingly embrace.

Aqua jogging is the practice of running underwater. Some wear a flotation belt while submerged, though with practice, many leave it behind. Aqua jogging is an indispensable form of cross-training for endurance athletes, as it simulates the motion and cadence of running without the impact, making it particularly valuable for those nursing injuries.

Proper aqua jogging form is deceptively difficult. It is crucial for athletes to engage their core and stay as vertical as possible, simultaneously pumping their arms as if running. Keeping your hands in a fist makes it harder, but many cup their hands to better stay afloat in the deep end. Remaining upright in the water can be counterintuitive, however. Many instinctively lean forward and begin kicking, striking an awkward compromise between running and doggy paddling.

The temptation to break form is amplified when aqua jogging with others. The pace of a proper aqua jog is humblingly slow, and it only takes one doggy paddler to lead an entire group astray. In aqua-jogging, forgoing an entertaining conversation with the group ahead is often necessary to maintain proper form.

As Nordic skier Shea Brams '26 described: "Speed is not the answer." In fact, if you're measuring an aqua jogging workout by speed, you're probably doing it wrong. The only feedback one really has is their heart rate and perceived effort.

"It's very effort-based," Track & Field runner George Madison '26.5 said. "There's not necessarily one pace or one power output that you can really lock in on, but I think that helps mentally to be able to push yourself really hard."

The mental strengthening that results from aqua jogging is of equal magnitude to any physical gain. Without your favorite show, or the only available live sports game on ESPN+, or even Spotify's curation of punchy EDM songs — a long aqua jogging session becomes a monotonous test of endurance among conditions of relative sensory deprivation, perfect for sharpening focus.

"It's boring. It's really boring," Zach Utz '26, Track & Field captain and self-proclaimed biggest team aqua jogging fan, said. "It also just sucks. It's markedly harder than the elliptical or the bike, and I think that turns people off."

Brams has developed her own strategies to pass the time in the pool.

"I don't think that I enjoy [aqua jogging], but I don't dread it," Brams said. "You can do squares, you can do laps. Sometimes I do shapes. I can spell out my name. I feel like you can do anything."

The fact that aqua jogging is physically hard and mentally tedious, though, is its greatest asset. Especially for endurance athletes, who specialize in coexisting with and overcoming pain, aqua jogging is a powerful tool.

"Running workouts are really hard but something we're really used to. With aqua jogging you have to get yourself in the mindset [that] it's supposed to be the same hard," distance runner Harry Griff '26 said.

For those unconvinced of aqua jogging's challenge, cross country head coach Nicole Wilkerson offers an "Aqua Cardio" PE elective. The course is not for the faint of heart, however.

"[Students] think it's gonna be an easy class," Wilkerson said. "But right out of the gates in the very first class you're doing intervals... I'm gonna have it be a good workout. I'm not wasting people's time."

One first-timer left nauseous because they had not worked out that hard in over a year. Jack Underwood '26, however, has become a true aqua jogging believer. Underwood took the course as a sophomore and, having found the training effective, returned for more this J-Term.

Beyond her PE course, aqua jogging has become synonymous with coach Wilkerson's training plan for Middlebury's running program. From 2013 to 2015, as the indoor track was being built, track athletes trained either outside or in the natatorium in the winter. In March of 2015, after countless hours spent running in the pool, three women's track & field runners earned All-American honors — including the individual title — in the indoor mile at nationals. "It's not easy, but 100% you can get the job done," Wilkerson reflected.

Coach Wilkerson is also known for her ambitious workout prescriptions.

"Nicole writes the aqua jog workouts as two by two minutes all out, four by one minute harder than that, and five by 30 seconds drown yourself," Griff joked.

To Wilkerson, the descriptions serve as a reminder of how hard the workout should feel, yet she recognizes the humor of an all-out effort followed by a harder all-out effort.

"That is probably what people have laughed about me most since I've been here at Middlebury," Wilkerson said. "People that graduated 20 years ago will still make fun of me for that."

Aqua jogging is the proverbial vegetable in an endurance athlete's cross-training toolkit: it might not be pleasant or enjoyable, but it is good for you. Of all the athletes I spoke to, each acknowledged that, despite the misery aqua jogging can cause, it is the most effective method of cross-training.

There's only one way to understand the true challenge of aqua jogging: to do it yourself. You can bring friends, if you can convince them, or pass the time with waterproof headphones. If neither of the above pans out, then you can always tackle aqua jogging the purist's way — but you'll be better for it.

SIMON SCHMIEDER / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Middlebury's diving well: the chlorinated temple of aqua jogging on campus.